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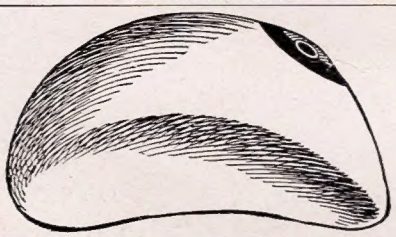

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Cover Design by Dominic Cammerota *Headings by Neil O'Keeffe*

Published once a month by The Butterick Company, Butterick Building, New York, N. Y., U. S. A. Joseph A. Moore, Chairman of the Board; S. R. Latshaw, President; W. C. Evans, Secretary; Fred Lewis, Treasurer; A. A. Proctor, Editor. Entered as Second Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry at Chicago, Illinois. Yearly subscription, $1.50 in advance. Single copy, 15 Cents. Foreign postage, 50c additional. Trade Mark Registered; Copyright, 1933, by The Butterick Company in the United States and Great Britain

The Right of the Line

By PETER B. KYNE

Author of "Old Sugarfoot"

MALACHI O'MARA, Major, United States Army, Retired, raised to the light a seidel of the beer his Filipino servant, Abelardo, brews for him. He eyed the beer critically, sighed and murmured:

"Sure, the Arrmy ain't what it used to be—but then it never was. 'Tis the same wit' beer. This last batch is as murrky as me milith'ry past. However, 'twill do."

I proposed the ancient toast to the old regular infantry regiment, in which for awhile I had served as a private with Malachi in that stirring and all but forgotten bit of Philippine history known as the Days Of The Empire—

"To the right of the line, Malachi."

Now, that toast must be drunk standing at attention—or at least it used to be in the harum-scarum days of the youth of Malachi O'Mara and myself, although possibly the Eighteenth Amendment has slain that regimental custom. Promptly Malachi stood at attention.

"To the right av the line—an' sweet rest to Auld Cut-The-Daisies."

He was recalling our company commander of thirty years agone . . .

He made me a sergeant [Malachi sat down and continued dreamily], an' I promised to tell ye the shtory. Ye mind the Santa Cruz Province campaign around Laguna de Bay in April av '99? Ye'll mind the auld regiment was part av the flyin' column known as Lawton's Bill Posters—layin' the land desolate wit' one hand an' pastin' up handbills wit' the other, informin' the inimy that our hearts was filled wit' love for the little brown brother, as he'd soon find out if he'd come in and surrendher his arrms. Ye'll mind that outdoor advertisin' offered twinty pesos for Remington an' Mauser rifles.

Havin' finished our job, we abandoned that province, lavin' thim to read our advertisin' an' think it over—which they did an' to a man decided Los Americanos were either children or fools or both. At any rate we'd the job to do over agin in September—or was it October?

An' that time 'twas not the picnic it was in April, nor did we bother to renew our advertisin' campaign.

For the second time we took the town av Santa Cruz. Ye mind the open green field foreninst the town whin you were there, an' the stone wall wit' the diamond shaped loopholes? Well, we had to go across that field an' over that wall agin—an' we knew by our casualties there was plinty av soldiers behind it an' a regular fightin' man commandin' thim.

Their musketry was betther nor ever we'd met before, an' from the wounded we picked up we learrned the native foorces in Santa Cruz Province were commanded by Colonel Pico Gonzales, a *mestizo* out av a Visayan woman by a Spanish artillery captain. He'd been an officer in the Spanish arrmy, an' whin the native revolution broke out in '96 him an' his native regiment wint over to the native side. They all had Mausers an' they had discipline an' they'd been taught to shoot. I'd a company o' thim in the Philippine Scouts years later; an' good men they were—in the middle thirties then, solid an' prideful.

In wan o' the fights before Manila earrly in '98 Pico Gonzales was wounded; an' whin the city fell to us in August av that year he was retired to recuperate.

D'ye mind the man that used to run the American Bar in Malate just across the plaza from the Cathedral Santa Isabel, whilst the auld regimint was stationed there, followin' the Spanish War an' whilst waitin' for the Filipinos to attack us? Well, that man was Pico Gonzales, though we did not know it then, and a good livin' he made off the throops.

He'd been educated abroad an' spoke English wit' an Oxford accent whin he wanted to, although he never let on to his trade, conversin' wit' that in bamboo Spanish, listenin' to us talk an' pickin' up what information he could for his own people. Ye'll mind we worked jawbone on Pico Gonzales between pay days; an' bein' soldiers an' all, lots av us, findin' ourselves in debt to Pico, took our cash trade elsewhere rather than shell out to Pico.

Which did not please Pico, as we discovered wan day whin we found wan of ours scuppered on outpost an' in the dead mouth av him a receipted bill for four pesos twinty centavos from Pico Gonzales. An' *that* did not set well on the stomachs of those that owed Pico for dhrinks—Isidore Cohen an' meself bein' among that number. For we knew now that, when the Filipino ruckus started, Pico must have had advance information of the start, for he'd closed the American Bar an' disappeared.

His receipt in full was the firrst news we had that Pico Gonzales was out in front av us, commandin' throops. Well, I'll say he was good for discipline on the outposts afther that, although heaven knows Isidore and I would have paid him had he been around to receive it following the February 1st pay day.

The war, ye'll remember, broke out the night av the 4th.

'TWAS late in the afthernoon whin we took Santa Cruz that second time. We had shtreet fightin'; an' whin 'twas over an' we counted noses, Tilly McNaught an' Bob Murfrow was missin'. We spint the night in the town, an' in the mornin' we formed skirmish line an' moved out into the open counthry.

We come to a *barrio* by the Lumbang River, an' there was a bit of a stone church there; high up on the thick timbered door of it we found Tilly McNaught an' Bob Murfrow, crucified an' dead as Julius Cæsar. In the mouth of Tilly was Pico Gonzales's receipt for thirteen pesos ten centavos; the mouth av Bob Murfrow yielded up a receipt for four pesos—all for drinks furnished an' on the billhead av the American Bar. I suppose, durin' the shtreet fightin', they'd got too far ahead an' Pico's men captured thim.

We got thim down an' buried thim, an' Auld Cut-The-Daisies cried. He said nothin'; but we could tell by the look av him that if ever Pico Gonzales fell into our hands the Article av War agin executing prisoners would be waived in his case.

Well, we dhruv Pico Gonzales an' his men before us that day; an' at retreat that night Auld Cut-The-Daisies demanded a list av all men av the company that owed for dhrinks to Gonzales. Auld Cut-The-Daisies added up the list, which come, as I remimber it, to two hundhred an' twinty-nine pesos.

So the captain collected what he could from Pico's creditors an' made up the balance out av his own pocket an' wrote a letter to Pico. Then he called up a young *teniente* we'd captured an' give him the envelop containin' the letter an' the money an' turned him loose with the request that he take the envelop to Pico Gonzales an' come back with an answer. If he did that he was to be allowed to depart agin in peace; but if he did not, then Auld Cut-The-Daisies swore he'd torture an' kill every Filipino prisoner that fell into his hands from then until the war inded.

The *teniente* promised to perform, an' off he wint. In the mornin' he come back with a note from Pico, written on the stationery av the American Bar. Pico returrned the money an' advised Auld Cut-The Daisies that he much preferred to make collection of the just debts due him in his own way.

"Ye may returrn to yer commandhin' officer," says Auld Cut-The-Daisies to the *teniente,* "an' inform him I accept his method of settlemint; an' may the Lord have mercy on his soul if ever I catch him!"

Thin he passed the worrd to the comp'ny an' bade each an' all of us, in case we should get pinched off from the comp'ny, to do wan of two things—fight to the death or blow our brains out.

Whilst I knew 'twas seldom they captured wan of us I knew, too, that wance in awhile they did. An' of the forty-odd they'd captured to date along other fronts we'd had no news. So I did not shleep well that night; an' along in the middle av it Private Isidore Cohen, who was lyin' in the grass next to me, rolled over an' says he to me, says he—

"Malachi, honesty is the best policy."

I remembered I was a co'pril.

"No conversation afther taps," says I. "An' if it's proddin' my conscience ye are, Isidore, know ye that 'twas never in me mind to bate the man out av his just due."

"Nor I," says Isidore, "although I doubt if he'll consider that definse if ever we come before him."

"Whin I come before that tiger man," says I, " 'twill be in sections."

" 'Tis a terrible war," says Isidore. "We advance in wan line an' go t'rough thim. There's always a few we go beyant, on account av havin' no second line follerin' to clean up afther us. An' that's the hell av a small foorce in the field. Sure, there's dozens av thim hide in houses or trees or in ditches or behint bushes, an' whin the line goes past thim these laddy-bucks we've overlooked come out an' prowl back over the field

lookin' for our wounded. Ye saw it done at Guadalupe, whin we had as much firing in our rear as we had in front."

"I command ye to shut up, Private Cohen," says I. "Ye're enough to give a man a nightmare."

"Ye're me squad leader, Malachi," says Isidore, "an' I look to ye for protection. If ever I'm wounded do you shtop an' look me over; an' if it seems I'm not long for this wurrld, do ye, like a good comrade, if I'm too helpless to blow me own light, blow it for me. An' for the same I'll be much obliged. I'll do the same for you if the situation should be reversed.

"We have no medical detail wit' us—divil a stretcher-bearer—an' well ye know a wounded man must lie out till the action's over before any wan comes back to pick him up. I wouldn't want to be left alone very long, Malachi. There's always inimy shtragglers, an' for all we know this Pico Gonzales may have sworn in every man-jack av his as a bill collector."

"Will ye shut up," says I, "ye blatherin' little Jew baboon, ye?"

"Would to all the gods, Jewish an' Gentile, I'd thought to pay his wife," says Isidore, ignorin' me authority. "He left her behind whin he took the field, for I saw the wench comin' from mass two days afther Pico had closed up shop an' disappeared. If I'd done that, she'd probably have sint him worrd av the payment," wails Isidore, "an' I'd have credit wit' him for bein' an honest man. He's half white, an' might his white blood not make him merciful? Might he not hit me a shlap on the back an' say, 'Isidore Cohen, ye are wan honest Americano? Go yer way in peace. 'Tis not the likes av you I'm intherested in.'"

From off in the dark somewhere Auld Cut-The-Daisies shpoke up:

"Co'pril O'Mara, have ye no discipline in yer squad, or must I break ye before the ink is dhry on yer warrant? Gag that man, if he sounds off agin. Damn all imaginative soldiers. Bechune you an' Cohen I've got the creeps meself."

WELL, 'twas one runnin' fight for thirrty mile around the shore av Laguna de Bay. There was a couple av launches with *cascos* in tow following us around the lake with the rations, an' aboord them we evacuated our wounded daily, with the exception of two that some native straggler went back across the field and cut his initials in with a bolo. And that did not help Isidore Cohen, although be the same token it made us all doubly watchful that no livin' inimy come out av his hidin' place afther the line had passed on. We took it aisy an' did a lot av research wurrk; an' often providence rewarded us.

Late wan afthernoon we come before Muntinlupa an' found intrinchmints in front av the town. We'd had a long hard day, marchin' an' fightin' little inconsequenchul rear-guard actions; so while the line flopped in the shade the colonel wint forward and made reconnaissance an' decided 'twould be betther to have the throops slept in the houses av Muntinlupa that night rather than bed supperless in the wet bush all night an' attack on an impty stomach in the mornin', for we'd outrun our supplies.

"We've only missed breakfast an' luncheon," says the colonel—bad cess to him—"an' we shtill have shtrength for the attack now. Whereas if we miss supper tonight an' breakfast tomorrow mornin', 'tis in our stomachs our hearts will be an' not in the job." And he ordhers us forward.

We wint slow across the field, wit' twinty feet bechune files. Whilst Nos. 2 an' 4 went forward Nos. 1 an' 3 shtood shtill, firin' an' tryin' to pin the inimy to the ground an' save casualties. Afther they'd fired six rounds, No. 2 an' No. 4 would halt an' take up the firing whilst No. 1 an' No. 3 ran forward, reloadin' as they wint.

At last we all got together an' wint in wit' the long yell an' the bayonet,

wit' neither of which we did any harm, bayonet charges an' yellin' in them days bein' useful only to scare the natives out av their trinches so's we could kill thim in the open.

Well, we dhruv thim out an' into Muntinlupa, us afther them like hounds afther hares, an' it was twilight when we shtarted the shtreet fightin'. God deliver me from shtreet fightin'! A man wants eyes all over him. I was shtandin' in the deep dhureway av a nice two-story house an' gettin' an occasional shot up an' down the street, whin Isidore Cohen crashes into me sanctuary.

"Watch them windows in the house across the street," pants Isidore. "There's some *hombres* up there an' they been shootin' at me."

Wan av Pico Gonzales's *tenientes* appeared in the window an' comminced worrk on us wit' a sixshooter. Isidore downed him, an' I was on the p'int av congratulatin' him on a fast snapshot whin the dhure behind us opened. I turrned an' had a quick vision av a chunky Filipino sergeant wit' his rifle raised. Before I could parry he brought it down on me head, an' I passed out.

Whin I come to I was lyin' in darkness in a place that did not smell nice; an' I was bound at ankle an' knee, wit' me two hands tied behind me, an' gagged. I shoved out me feet an' brought up agin a wall; I inched forward, an' me head brought up agin another wall. I rolled over two feet and bumped another wall; I rolled back —an' bumped into somebody's carcass. An' it moved, thrustin' agin me.

"That would be Isidore Cohen," thinks I.

Then a big drop av rain fell on me face, followed be a downpour; so I knew I was lyin' in the box av a carabao cart out in the open an' that the carabao cart hadn't long previous been used to haul manure.

The night was silent save for the dhrum av the rain; but pretty soon there was a crash av thunder an' a rip av sheet lightnin' that lit up the box av the cart for about three seconds. An' in that three seconds I have a good look into the bloody face av Private Isidore Cohen. He's gagged wit' a twist av dirty cloth; but he's gnawin' like a rat at one corner av it, an' I see him wink at me as plain as could be.

Now, whin a wink is the sole line av communication, an' a smart Jew has done the winkin', there's a deal av m'anin' to it. In Isidore's eyes, for the three seconds they looked into mine, there was nayther fright nor rage but only a great cunnin' an' a sly bit av humor. Wit' his wink it seemed to me he was sayin':

"Don't worry, Malachi. I'll soon have us out av this."

TWINTY times the lightnin' lit our quarthers an' twinty times I saw Isidore wink. An' he was shtill gnawin'. Presintly he shtopped that, heaved himself up an' fell backward, so his head was now at my feet, an' I felt him feel around wit' his head an' begin nuzzlin' me feet. An' thin I knew what he was up to. He was dhraggin' the cloth gag across the buckles av me campaign shoes, catchin' the cloth gag on wan av thim an' slowly rippin' a hole t'rough the gag. For an hour he kept it up, so I knew he must be meetin' wit' success.

Finally he give that up an' come nuzzlin' up me body, an' whin his nose shtruck the web cartridge belt that was shtill around me waist he give a grunt an' comminced nuzzlin' me belt. I knew he was for shlippin' the lower end av a cartridge in undher the gag if he could —an' bimeby I knew he'd succeeded, for he lifted an' pulled wit' all his might an' me body come clear av the floor av the box; then there was a tearin' sound an' he did it agin; he heaved himself ahead an' I felt his breath on my face before that face wint around to my ear.

An' thin Isidore Cohen shpoke, in the faintest whisper.

"I've lost two lower front teeth, Malachi," says Isidore. "Damned rough

dintal worrk, but I'm shet av the gag an' I have teeth enough left to gnaw the rope on your hands. Roll over, ye big Irisher, till I get to work on ye."

That Isidore had teeth like a rat. I'd been tied wit' a piece av light hemp rope, but Isidore wint t'rough it a strand at a time. Me hands were free in fifteen minutes. I was tryin' to untie the knot on me knees when we hearrd voices approachin', so I lay on me back to hide the fact that me hands were free, an' I hearrd Isidore turrn over wit' his face to the floor to hide the fact that his gag was gone. Somebody reached in an' felt av me; somebody from the other side did the same to Isidore; thin we felt the forward ind av the cart go up an' heard a native talkin' to a carabao; the cart came to the auld level agin an' we knew the carabao was in the shafts wit' the yoke fast on the neck av him.

We moved off, joltin' over the road, an' by the voices an' the slosh av feet in the mud I knew we had an escort on both sides an' behind us. Isidore rolled over to me an' put his lips to me ear.

"How many av thim do ye make in the escort?" says Isidore.

I reached up me hand an' tapped his face five times.

"Right," says Isidore. "Undo yourself an' be damned careful whilst ye're at it."

First I untied the cloth gag. 'Twas knotted at the back av me neck. Then I got me knees an' feet loose an' felt like a man agin. In a few minutes I had Isidore untied, an' agin he laid his lips to me ear.

"Two days ago," says he, "I was on the detail carryin' the wounded out aboord a *casco*. Lavin' the *casco,* me bayonet caught in the rail as I was dhroppin' overboord into four feet av water, an' the scabbard wit' the bayonet in it broke off at the shank. Not bein' able to carry it on me belt thereafter, I thrust the contraption down into me left leggin', with just the hilt av the bayonet peepin' up—an' be Judas Iscariot an' all the Howly Prophets av Israel, they never noticed it! I shtill have it!"

'Twas thin I remimbered I was in command; although havin' been a co'pril less than two weeks I'd almost forgotten it.

"Wit' me two big fists an' me No. 10 feet an' you wit' the bayonet I'm double damned if they crucify us, Izzy, me lad," says I.

I looked up. The rain had shtopped an' a few shtars was peepin' through, so I knew we was travelin' in the open. But I knew that counthry around Muntinlupa from our first visit in April was intherspersed wit' open rice field an' jungle an' the chances were we'd soon enther a road through a short shtretch av bush and that road would be black as a pocket.

I explained that to Isidore, for what wit' the creakin' an bumpin' av the cart there was no danger we'd be overhearrd.

"THE bull dhriver's probably a soldier," says I. "He's sittin' on the crosspiece av the shafts, wit' his legs hangin'. Ye can see his head an' shouldhers loomin' over the front ind of this box we're in. Whin we enther the bush an' it's so dark the escoort marchin' behind can't see a hand in front av thim, I'll get the two hands av me undher the chin av that dhriver.

"Wan swift jerrk backward an' the neck av him will be bruk, an' if I'm lucky divil a peep will there be out av him. 'Tis in nature he'll be wearin' a belt wit' a bolo in it, or maybe a kris or a kampalan. Do you lean over whilst I hold the dead man from fallin' off, an' possess yerself av that weapon an' have a care would ye rap it agin the box av the cart.

"The carabao will go nosin' along, feelin' his way, an' as the woods road will be narrow the escoort av wan man on each side will be crowded into the bushes, so they'll dhrop back an' march wit' the three men in the rear. Hince they'll be bunched. Whin I give the worrd, do you, Isidore, dhrop off into

the road on the left side, whilst I do the same on the right. Shtand there an' at the instant they shtop an' shtrike a match, do you say nothin' but reach out an' grab the man nearest ye wit' yer left hand an' dhrive yer bayonet into his guts wit' yer right.

"Havin' done that, dhraw back into the bush an' give me fightin' room, because I'll be into the brown av them with me bolo or kris or kampalan, shwipin' away in the dark or a half light, an' 'tis not wishful I am to visit the fury av me attack upon you. We're bound to get two av them, an' they wit' rifles an' ammunition. The other three will run like wild divils, never suspectin' 'tis us they have to deal wit' but thinkin' they've run into wan of our outposts."

"Malachi," says Isidore Cohen, "ye're that cunnin' I'm thinkin' ye must have Jew blood in ye."

"There is some," I whisper back to him, "that maintain the lost tribe av Benjamin got into our people, God forgive us. An' I'm thinkin' there must be something in the tale, for in many ways we're alike as two peas."

I pressed Izzy's hand, for he was a grand little fightin' man. An' sure why not? Weren't the Jews the divil an' all for fightin' in the olden days? I put me arm around Isidore an' give the little man a hug, for I knew I could depind upon him to the last dhrop av his blood. Isidore—sure, like all Jews he was a sintimental craythure—kissed me on the jowl.

"You great towerin' Irisher," says he, "'tis a proud man I am to play David to your Goliath. We're invincible," says he. "The two great races, side be side, insures victhory'll perrch on our shtandards."

"Remimber what I tell ye, Isidore," says I, "an' obey ordhers, or 'tis Malachi O'Mara an' not vichtory that'll perch, an' 'twill be on the backbone av ye I'll be perchin'."

Isidore looked up into the night.

"'Tis darker nor death," says he. "Let us at it. I can't shtand waitin'. It makes me nervous."

"So be it, Isidore," says I, an' got softly up on me knees an' crept forward to the cinter av the cart box, for 'twas there I'd marked the head an' shoulders av the bull dhriver whilst yet 'twas starshine.

I measured wit' me arrms to make sure; then I reached out, an' be the merrcy av the Lord the two hands av me closed over the dhriver's mouth. I could hear his neck crack like a rotten stick as I jerrked his head back, usin' the top av the box for a fulcrum. Divil a peep out av him! He was dead like that, an' Isidore leanin' over an' down feelin' for his belt.

"Got it," Isidore whispers in me ear.

So I drug me victim in over the front ind of the cart box, Isidore caught him be the heels an' we laid him down wit' great riverence, for I had a feelin' I'd ought to recite the "Litany For The Dead."

"Creep out along the shafts," says I, "an' dhrop off wit'out a sound close to the head av the carabao an' shtop him. Gimme that toad-sticker."

Isidore passed me a three-foot kampalan, very heavy. An' I run me hand along the cuttin' edge, an' it was razor sharp. Thin I said goodby to little Isidore be shtrokin' him bechune the shouldher blades, an' he answered be passin' his hand across me cheek; then I knew he was shteppin' out av the cart an' down to the crossbars av the shafts.

Now, I suppose ye were not in the Service long enough to learn this, me lad, but in battle vichthory depinds on a plan—a good plan if ye're up to it, a bad one if ye're not, but at least a plan. Havin' made yer plan, ye attack an' follow through an', once committed to the action, bad cess to him that changes his plan for another. So I had made me plan.

I figured the escoort was ten yards behind us, an' I give Isidore five seconds to climb out along the shaft an' drop off quiet close be the head av the carabao

an', wit' a jerrk on the rope in the nose-ring, shtop the baste; whilst waiting I picked up the body of the dead Filipino an' aised it to the ground. Almost simultaneous the carabao shtopped, although there was nothin' suspicious in that, since a carabao is always shtoppin' whin he should be movin' on.

Me head was one great pain, an' I was dizzy as I shtood up; I wiped the dhried blood out av wan eye, raised me kampalan—an' waited till the escoort shtumbled in the darkness over the body av their late comrade an' I hearrd words av surprise. Thin, as I'd planned it, even though I couldn't ordher it done, every man-jack in the escoort shtruck a match to have a look!

I SAW Isidore shtep out of the shadow an' dhrive his bayonet into the back of the man nearest him who was bendin' down for a close look. 'Twas a dull bayonet—as all bayonets are—so the little man used both hands to dhrive it home. At the same inshtant I leapt down out av the cart, an' shplit the skulls av the two min on me right an' farthest away from Isidore, for something told me he could use the man next the one he'd dhruv his bayonet into.

The matches wint out, an' in the darkness I got a bayonet thrust in me belly. Praise God, the p'int fouled in me web belt, so wit' me left hand I tossed it aside before trigger could be pulled, climbed up on him an' let him have it. 'Twas like slicin' down t'rough a cheese, an' my part av the great plan was accomplished; so I shtood, waitin' to hear from Isidore.

I hearrd a scuffle. Thin:

"I'm wrastlin' No. 2," says Isidore in a shtrangled v'ice. "Me bay'net shtuck in the breast bone av No. 1 an' I could not withdraw. Shtrike a light, Malachi. This lad has a dirrk!"

So I shtruck a match, an' there was Isidore on his back, wit' legs an' arrms around No. 2, who had a shorrt currved knife he was thryin' to get his arm free to use; m'anwhile he was shtrivin' to get Isidore's magnificent nose bechune the nice white teeth av him, but failin' bekase Isidore kept twistin' his head. 'Twas a most amusin' sight, an' I shtruck another match the betther to enjoy the spectacle.

"Tap him, ye brute," says Isidore. "If he bites off me nose I'll never be allowed in the synagogue agin. 'Tis a peerin', curiosity-seekin' Gintile the rabbi'll take me for."

"If he makes a snubnose av ye, Isidore," says I, liftin' me kampalan for a short, sure cut, "I'll acknowledge ye for one av our own."

An' wit' that I made a neat dab wit' the heavy ind av me weapon. 'Twas like openin' a coconut.

"I'm dhrownded in blood," says Isidore, an' rolls out from undher the corpse. "Have we no more wurrlds to conquer? Faith, for a man that hates fightin' on an impty belly, 'tis like Hannibal himself I'm feelin'." An' he wiped his face wit' his sleeves.

A proud man I was to command the like av Isidore Cohen.

We shtruck more matches an' cast about us. Now, whin they'd captured us back in Muntinlupa they'd took our Krags away; seein' Isidore's belt carried no bayonet, they'd left the belt on him; an' they'd left my belt on me, but had removed the bayonet. In the road we found our two Krags an' on the dead, two av which was officers, we found two .38 pistols wit' six-inch barrels an' leather boxes wit' spare ammunition.

"We'll take these for souvenirs," says Isidore. "Keep on shtrikin' matches, Malachi, whilst in me capacity as public administhrator I frisk the late laminted for watches, jewelry an' cash money."

We each got a wristwatch, a diamond ring we aftherward hocked for three hundhred pesos in Manila, eighty-eight pesos in auld Spanish currency, a twinty-dollar greenback an' a handful av miscellaneous centavos, pesetas, nickels, dimes, quarters an' 'dobe dollars, a goold

pencil an' a pearl handled pocketknife wit' a corkscrew on it—a most useful weapon for any soger. Thin we gathered up the weapons av the fallen an' tossed them in the bull cart.

"Av wan thing I'm cerrtain," says Isidore thin, "we're lost in the midst av an impinetrable wilderness."

"We are not, Isidore," says I, "for I have faith in yonder carabao. All we have to do is turrn him around an' he'll plod back wit' us the way he come."

"Hello," says Isidore, "I see a bright light up the road a bit."

I looked.

"Bright it is, Isidore," says I, "Too bright, in fact, for a native light, which, as ye know, is made from floatin' a bit av cotton wick in a saucer av coconut ile. I'm thinkin' 'tis a lantern burnin' kerosene; an' if it is, it sheds its light on no common Filipino. As it shines higher nor our heads, common sinse tells us 'tis a light in a window burrnin' brightly for us, an' where there's a window there's a big nipa shack, an' where there's a nipa shack 'tis in reason to suppose there may be other nipa shacks—a *barrio* in fact."

"Prudent for ye, Malachi. There shpoke the pinprick av the blood av our people in ye. Undoubtedly 'tis the house at the head av a *barrio,* wit' two lines av houses an' one main shtreet. Shpeakin' av new wurrlds to conquer—"

"Isidore," says I, intherruptin' the little man, "'tis the restless mintal energy av yer race that is most disconcertin' to a Gintile. Ye will be good enough to remimber I'm a co'pril an' in command here. Howld yer blatherin' till I make a reconnaissance. Thin, heaven willin', I'll come back to ye wit' a plan."

"Goodby to ye forever, *compadre mio!*" wails Isidore. "Divil a *barrio* ever was that didn't harbor pariah dogs. Ye'll be barked at an' bitten."

"I'll not," says I. "Ye should know that pariah dogs hunt at night an' that every lasht pariah dog is now scoutin' among the dead back in Muntinlupa."

An' wit' that I wint cautiously forward two hundhred yards, for I had little fear av bein' discovered, the common people, includin' insurrectos, in Luzon bein' in the habit av goin' to bed wit' the chickens; an', be the same token, I knew that thim that sat up wit' a kerosene lantern were not privates.

I HALTED outside the house an' looked in the window av a big nipa shack built on stilts four feet off the ground. There was a man walkin' back an' forth—I could see his head an' shoulders—an' him talkin' to another man. Afther listenin' five minutes I knew there was but two av thim in the house an' that the walkin' man was Colonel Pico Gonzales, an' him layin' plans for what he'd do whin, come daylight, he could depind on the Americanos to resume the advance an' push him out av his timperary refuge. The rest av the *barrio* was quiet, but I could hear a sinthry walkin' up an' down the shtreet, so be that I knew the *barrio* was full av sleepin' soldiery.

I wint back to Isidore an' found him nervous from bein' left alone wit' the dead. We turrned the bull cart around in the direction we'd come an' tied the carabao to a tree; thin, whilst Isidore, at my ordher, gathered up the pieces av rope with which we'd ben tied, I ripped a shirrt off wan av the dead min an' tore shtrips out av it to make two gags.

"Follow me, Isidore," says I, an' back to the head av the *barrio* shtreet we wint —an' Isidore had an eyeful. "I'll go round to the door," says I, "an' shtand beside the four-foot ladder that leads up to it. As they come out I'll give them 'butts to the front' wit' all the strength that's in me, bein' careful to place me butt in the short ribs an' knock the wind complately out av thim."

"So they can't let out a yell?" says Isidore.

"Ye can see t'rough a ladder, Isidore. Exactly. Now, there's a sinthry walkin' the shtreet. He comes up abreast av

this house an' walks back—"

"Ye're one up on me," says Isidore, complainin' an' showin' the greed av him. "I claim that sinthry."

"Wit' a glad free heart I give him to you, Isidore," I whispered.

So Isidore waited till the sinthry had approached an' turrned—an' thin, in his stockin' feet, he pussyfooted up on him an' cut his head in two halves wit' my kampalan.

He come back wit' the man's Mauser an' belt.

"Count twinty," says I. "Be that time I'll be at me post beside the door. Thin do you pick up a handful av gravel an' hurrl it t'rough the window at that lantern. That done, jine me at the door."

Me plan worrked like a piston in ile. As the gravel scatthered in the room an' tinkled agin the lamp globe, the two min inside got the wind up, for a nipa shack is no place to be caught in, an' Pico Gonzales knew from long experience 'twas our habit to set *barrios* afire. He grabbed his belt, wit' swoord an' pistol, an' leapt for the door, for he was a fightin' man an' preferred a lot av fightin' room.

I planted me butt a trifle forward av the short ribs an' he wint out wit' only a bit av a gasp; I'd just time to dhraw back me Krag to repeat the movement whin his comrade come t'rough—an' him I piled on top av his superior officer. They were both speechless an' helpless, but not unconscious; so I knelt on thim one afther the other an' let thim have the weight av me right fist on the chins av thim—an' thin Isidore an' I together gagged thim an' tied thim hand, knee an' ankle.

I piled the second man over Isidore's shouldher, picked up Colonel Pico Gonzales an' led the way back to the bull cart, where we laid thim inside like two little baby buntings, so we did.

"Home, James," says I, an' wint to unloose the carabao.

"Home, hell," says Isidore, an' shtruck a match an' looked at his new wristwatch. "It lacks an hour av dawn; an' well ye know, Malachi, that the lads in yonder *barrio* lack five-o'clock-in-the-mornin' courage. The wind isn't all I could ask for but, be the toenails av Moses, the beard av Abraham an' the long silken tresses av Absalom, it blows in the right direction. Lave you an' me, Malachi, fire that *barrio*."

"From the middle av it," says I, joyful as a child, "so 'twill burrn like tinder toward both inds. We'll lie in the half light at this ind an' whin they pile out we'll open on thim wit' magazine fire. Whin a *barrio's* burnin' the bamboo in it explodes like rifle fire at every knot or j'int; they'll be dhroppin' as we fire into the brown av thim an' divil a wan av thim can tell which direction the bullets are comin' from."

"If I seem to project me perrsonality into a co'pril's business," says Isidore, "I'd suggest we load these five Mausers we've captured this night an' bring them wit' us to the firin' p'int. We'll be shootin' in a deceptive light at movin' targets an' 'twould be a shame to waste our opportunity be slackenin' fire to reload our Krags. If the fire is continyous I'm thinkin' we'll git enough for a mess. I'm a qualified marksman an' you're an experrt rifleman an' I doubt if, even in that light, we can miss at a hundhred yards an' less. They'll not come our way, for that way they know the inimy lies, so they'll beat it for the open counthry out the other ind av the burnin' *barrio*."

"There's logic in that, Isidore," says I, an' we done it.

In the faint starlight—for the *barrio* lay at the edge av the bush—we crept down the shtreet an' touched a match to the lower fringe av nipa on four shacks in the middle av the *barrio*, then run like wild divils back to where we'd laid our rifles.

The flames was lickin' up the walls be the time we'd gotten into position, an' presently there was a hell av a conglomeration av voices yellin':

"Fuego! Fuego! Los Americanos!"

THE bamboo was poppin' now, an' they thought it was rifle firin' as well. Four insurrectos leapt out into the shtreet thirrty feet from us, an' we got thim. Out of house afther house they come be the dozens, an' them that saw men dhroppin' did not wait to investigate. 'Twas a riot! Some got caught bechune our fire an' the terrible heat in the middle av the *barrio;* thim we didn't shoot dhropped from the heat. We laid aside our Krags afther imptyin' thim, an' took to the Mausers, which are bether for rapid fire, because they load wit' a clip instead av be the single cartridge.

We had five minutes av rapid fire before the lasht target disappeared, so we rose up an' wint into Colonel Pico Gonzales's house to see what loot we could find before it burrned. On a table lay a shtack av official papers an' a platther wit' cold rice an' a big slab av roast carabao meat wit' some cut off it. Also a whole roast duck, three bottles av champagne an' two bottles av Frinch cognac. We carried all this away up the road to our official headquarthers at the bull cart.

The glow from the burnin' *barrio* was lightin' up the counthryside for a quarther av a mile in every direction; so we sat down be the side av the road an' pulled the cork on wan bottle av the Frinch cognac. 'Twas as mild as mother's milk, an' we took three long dhrinks each to whet our appetites, for we was shtarvin'.

We saved the roast duck an' wan bottle av the champagne for poor hungry Auld Cut-the-Daisies, for I was ever one to remimber that rank has its privileges an' a soger must look afther his captain wit' the same lovin' affection wit' which his captain looks afther him.

'Twas broad daylight before we could venture back into the ruins av the *barrio.* Nobody had been burnt to death, praise be, but the dead in the shtreet had been scorched. We frisked all twinty-eight av thim an' got a few more cheap watches, a ruby ring an' sixty-five pesos more or less. We'd brought the bull cart down wit' us, an' into this we loaded the twinty-eight Mausers we picked up be the dead, an' a collection av bolos, dirrks, Spanish cavalry sabers an' five Webley revolvers.

The sun was up now an' we were feeling tired an' shleepy, what wit' our night's wurrk—so we killed wan quart av the champagne, warm as it was, afther which we shtarted back the way we'd come. Nothin' would do Isidore but he must ride the carabao whilst I sat on the crossbar, native fashion; an' ploddin' along thus we kilt the second quart av champagne an' half av wan quart av the Frinch cognac, an' me heart was in me mouth for fear Isidore would fall off the carabao an' be run over be the heavy cart. Co'pril that I was, I had no conthrol over him now. Discipline had gone to hell entirely; so, finding it a bit harrd to maintain me official dignity, I j'ined wit' Isidore in singin':

"Oh, the dirty little adjutant's the worrst
wan av them all—
He has ye on the parade ground to answer
every call,
An' if ye are not shteady, at guard mount or
at dhrill,
Oh, it's: 'Sergeant, do yer djooty. Put that
rookie in the mill.'"

Down the jungle road we come, roarin' like bulls av Bashan, for the food an' the liquor had lifted up the hearts av us an' give us new stringth. We'd done well financially, an' Isidore had high hopes av selling our shtock av Mauser rifles to our own Uncle Sam at twinty pesos each.

"For why," says Isidore, "if the Governmint will pay a native twinty pesos for surrindherin' his Mauser, why will that same Government not pay the same price to two honest sogers for takin' Mausers away from the native an' killin' him? 'Tis a double serrvice we do the land we love." An' he lets out a devastatin' whoop, just as we emerge

from the belt av bush into the open counthry—an' what do we see, not two hundhred yards away, but a skirrmish line av ours advancing across the rice paddies.

We waved impty bottles at thim an' sang "Columbia, The Gim Av The Ocean." There was an officer walkin' down the middle av the road an', be the Rock av Cashel, 'twas Auld Cut-the-Daisies; an' there was blood in the eye av him.

"Detail! Halt!" says I. "Fall in!"

So Isidore fell off, an' wit' some difficulty I picked the little wasp up an' set him on his feet, whilst the captain shtood starin' at us. I give him the Big Figger Four as best I could, considherin' I held the roast duck in me fist, whilst Isidore saluted wit' the quart av champagne in his.

"Sir," says I, "Co'pril O'Mara 'n' Private Cohen report for djooty."

"Where in hell were ye at reveille?"

"In action, sir, an' too far away to hear firrst call soundin'."

"Ain't our skipper the sweet lamb, Malachi!" hiccups Isidore. "Show him the presint we've brought for him. Malachi, do ye carve the duck for Auld Cut-The-Daisies whilst I draw the cork from this bottle. 'Tis famished the captain is."

"Ye're dhrunk an' bloody as butchers," howls Auld Cut-The-Daisies, but he makes a snatch at the roast duck; whilst Isidore is fillin' his tin cup the captain gnaws at the duck an' bechune bites takes a look in the cart. "War—bloody war," says he to himself. "An' loot! Begorra, we can use this bull cart an' the bull."

HE'D halted the skirrmish line, an' the min had flopped. Auld Cut-The-Daisies sat down on a rock an' ate wit'-out further commint, whilst I related the tale av our advintures.

"Well done, Sergeant," says he at the lasht. "I doubt could I have done betther meself."

"Beggin' the Captain's pardon, sir, but I'm a co'pril," says I.

"Ye're damned well whatever I say ye are—an' I say ye're a sergeant—or will be this night whin I make ye one at rethreat. Co'pril Cohen, ye have not got a fine milith'ry figger, what wit' the bowlegs av you an' you a half portion man wit' a head like a wart that's grown out an' haired over, but nivertheless ye have the spirit av the royal Bengal tiger, coupled wit' the cunnin' av the mongoose. Sergeant O'Mara, have ye no other little token av affection for yer poor auld comp'ny commandher?"

"We have here, sir," says I, producin' it from inside me shirrt, "a bottle av Frinch cognac that was brewed the night before the Big Wind in Ireland. We've saved it for the captain, bless him."

"I accept this noble sacrifice in the intherests o' efficiency an' sobriety in me command," says he, "an' thank ye both from the bottom av me heart. I'd an idjea there was more to this than champagne. Well, for what ye've done I'll forgive ye for missing reveille an' I'll thry to forget that ye did not act wit' the discretion I expect av min av me command in permittin' yerselves to get captured. Ye've been robbin' the quick an' the dead an' well I know it, an' whin we git back into the lowlands agin I'll give ye a week's pass to Manila to spind yer ill gotten gains. Also, I'll take great pleasure in recomminding each av ye to the Secreth'ry av War for a Certificate av Merit."

Ye will remimber [said Malachi O'Mara in an aside] that in thim days they used to give a bit av sheepskin called a Certificate av Merit for what they give Distinguished Serrvice Crosses for in the Great War. In fact, be gineral ordher in 1917 we were allowed to trade in our auld Certificates av Merit for the D. S. C, which is how I got mine.

[Malachi continued.]

"What?" yells Isidore Cohen. "A dirrty bit av sheepskin? Take shame to yerself, sor. Two important prisoners

an' thirty-four dead—an' shtands av arms, cutlasses, dirrks an' pistols galore —an' ye'd recommind us for the certificate! Can I wear a bit av sheepskin on me breast whin I return to the East Side av New York whin this crool war is over? Give me a ribbon or howld yer peace forever, sir."

Auld Cut-The-Daisies blushed like a girrl.

"I beg yer pardon, Co'pril Cohen, but what ye two did was exthraordinary gallanthry in action over an' beyant the call av djooty. I'll recommind ye for the Medal av Honor after I've counted yer dead. An' now, me dear, bloody, dhrunken, worrthless vagabones, what shall I do wit' this man, Pico Gonzales? 'Tis like he'll be a nuisance to us, dhraggin' him around. 'Tis all right to dhrag wan prisoner, but two is another shtory. Havin' nothin' agin the other man, I'll put up wit' his comp'ny; but me gorge rises at thought av the bowld Pico."

"Give him, sir, to Red Olson an' Jimmy Burke," says I. "Red was Tilly McNaught's bunkie, an' Jimmy an' Bob Murfrow always got dhrunk together."

"Tell Olson an' Burke to report to me," says the captain.

An' whin the lads reported, says Auld Cut-The-Daisies:

"Sergeant O'Mara has a prisoner av war be the name as Colonel Pico Gonzales. Remove the gag an' the ropes from the gintleman an' take him over to Apparri."

"But, sir," says Olson, who was a Swede, "Apparri is two hundhred mile to the north."

"I'll want ye back here in fifteen minutes," says Auld Cut-The-Daisies. "Ye can make it in time if ye're the smart sogers I think ye are. Ye might borrow the magic carpet av Bagdad."

So Olson an' Burke took Colonel Pico Gonzales over to Apparri, an' I noticed Burke took along wit' him the stake rope belongin' to the carabao. They wint shtraight into the woods—an' were back in ten minutes an' we resumed the advance.

At the firrst well we come to Auld Cut-The-Daisies had a detail dhraw wather an' douse it over Isidore an' me, for, says he—

"Ye remind me av two dogs that's been killin' sheep, an' the sight av ye is horrifyin' to me finer sintimints."

He sat down an' opened the bottle av Frinch cognac. An' whin the blood was off us an' we shtood dhrippin' foreninst him, he raised the bottle to his lips.

"'Tis ever ben the fortune av our regimint," says he, "to howld the right av the line. No flank attack has ever bruk our right. Sergeant O'Mara, ye'll take command av the firrst section, the big fours, where ye belong. An' No. 1, front rank, firrst squad in yer section will be Co'pril Cohen. He's little an' he does not belong wit' the right av the line, because God made him to be No. 4, rear rank, last squad, last section. However, the divil himself could niver keep a good man down, an' since the little man's fought himself out av his class an' is attached to ye be ties av blood, take him an' much good may he do ye whin ye get him."

He shtood to attintion, uncovered to us an' shtood wit' his campaign hat held over his heart. Thin he dhrank to us.

"To the right av the line," says Auld Cut-The-Daisies, "an' the pride av the Serrvice! Bad luck to ye if ye thry me patience, because ye know I love ye. An' remimber this, Cohen, ye junk thief—divil a dollar will the Government pay ye for those captured rifles. 'Twould be settin' a bad precedent. Dismissed!"

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

The Shanghaied Ship

By the Author of "Mystery Lake"

THE Great Garlow was pulling rabbits from a hat. He was good. Even the most blasé of the guests of Porter Rice, assembled in the saloon of the Rice yacht, were forced to admit it. All but one of them applauded. That one, Carter Pomeroy, turned his bored eyes upon Miss Estelle Nunan and, after smothering a yawn, said—

"He's good, all right; but it only proves the hand is quicker than the eye."

The steward appeared and took three rabbits, alive and kicking, out of the saloon. Two bells sounded from the bridge. Below deck the Diesels were humming serenely. Waves whispered. Otherwise no sound intruded as the Great Garlow prepared his next diversion.

Taking Miss Nunan by the hand, the magician led her to the center of the saloon. Standing a pace behind her, he bowed. The girl, slender, pretty, charmingly attired in evening dress, faced him with a puzzled smile. Garlow's eyes were on the green jade necklace at her throat.

"The evening is chilly," he pattered as he bared his arms to the elbows and retreated still another pace from his subject. "Therefore, will any gentleman be kind enough to provide this young lady with a wrap? Any gentle-

man, mind you, and any wrap."

Carter Pomeroy, who knew quite well that he himself was *not* an accomplice in this trick, arose languidly. Crossing to Mrs. Tarleton, who was seated beside the skipper, Schultz, he borrowed her Spanish shawl.

"Will this do?" he asked.

"Quite well," agreed Garlow. "That one, or any other. You, or any other, may drape it around the shoulders of this lovely young girl."

Pomeroy draped the shawl around Miss Nunan's bare shoulders, then returned to his seat.

Each onlooker now gave alert attention to Garlow the Great. He was magnificent. He resembled a tall, elegant Satan, Pomeroy thought. His hair, eyes, twirled mustaches and spike of beard were jet black. His face was as swarthy as a Moor's except for a long, deep, white scar from lip to ear.

"My dear young lady," he said softly, "your throat is now well protected from the evening chill. But what of your necklace? Are you sure it is safe out of sight under that shawl?"

"Why not?" the girl asked him.

"Pray have a look."

She removed the shawl. All in the room saw that the jade necklace, which had graced her throat only a moment ago, was now gone.

Carter Pomeroy, although he had been affecting boredom all evening, was in fact watching keenly. He saw by Miss Nunan's expression that her surprise was equal to his own. In her voice, too, there was unmistakable dismay.

"Why, I don't understand. I wore it only a moment ago, and no one touched me. How—?"

"'Tis true it is a pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true!'" pursued Garlow smoothly. "But come. Bear up bravely. Since it's gone, let us console ourselves with sweet music. Will you play for us the 'Moonlight Sonata'?"

Perplexed and pensive, Estelle Nunan crossed to the grand piano on the far side of the saloon. She seated herself, and her fingers struck the first notes of the movement suggested by Garlow.

The response was a tinny discord.

"Has the rolling of your ship untuned it, Captain Schultz?" asked Garlow.

He moved quickly to the piano and lifted its heavy hinged cover. If Garlow's hand darted within it, Pomeroy, though watching sharply, failed to see it. It was the girl herself who retrieved that which had caused the discord, the necklace, as it lay upon the harp of wire strings within the piano.

"Capital!" applauded Porter Rice, clapping his short, fat hands.

"He geds bedder and bedder all the vile," agreed Captain Schultz.

"But how could you do it?" demanded Miss Nunan as she fastened the jewels again about her neck.

"I could do it," purred the magician, "because I am the Great Garlow."

"It's about the only kind of a show I get a kick out of," Porter Rice said as he took a seat beside Pomeroy.

"Must have cost you a pretty penny to charter that fellow for the cruise, didn't it?" Pomeroy suggested.

"Well, I can afford it, can't I?" Rice answered. "But, as a matter of fact, it's costing me very little. Garlow wanted to go to Santiago, anyway, where he has a theater engagement. So I got him cheap."

The yacht was on its third night of a cruise from Los Angeles to Valparaiso. Its position, Pomeroy estimated, was now about five hundred miles off lower Mexico. He further estimated that, following a great circle course to the destination, the vessel would cross the equator about a thousand miles west of Equador.

"Yeah, I get a kick out of that hokum," the pudgy millionaire repeated; and he prattled on in that vein, never dreaming that Pomeroy's mind was far away.

Least of all did he dream that Carter Pomeroy himself was planning a trick

far more ambitious than any ever essayed by the Great Garlow.

"How big are forty gold-bags?" Pomeroy was asking himself. "Could you get them in a bushel basket? No, you'd need two bushel baskets. And how heavy are those forty bags? . . . How big? . . . "

Had Porter Rice read Pomeroy's mind he would have been stricken dumb with amazement.

A RADIO had been tuned in on an orchestra broadcasting from California, and three couples on the yacht were now dancing. Oswald Clegg, a Frisco broker, was dancing with his wife. A young fashion-plate answering to the name of Val Montaigue was doing his best with Mrs. Tarleton, a portly widow. The Great Garlow had chosen Estelle Nunan for a partner.

In a few minutes Second Officer Featherstone cut in on Garlow. He had no more than done so when the music switched to a tune unsuitable for dancing. Montaigue, twirling the radio dials in an effort to get another station, chanced to hit upon a news broadcast from the Tower of the *Times*, KHJ, Los Angeles.

"Smother it." Featherstone scowled.

"No, let's hear it, Val," insisted Broker Clegg. He sat down and mopped his florid brow. "Maybe we'll get some market reports."

The news items, however, did not include market reports. Instead, there came a discussion of current National legislation. The theme startled Pomeroy. For a moment he was dismayed.

The words which flowed from the radio were:

"Although seven hundred millions in gold have been turned into the banks in obedience to the Presidential edict, it is estimated that a like amount is still being hoarded. Tomorrow, May 1st, is the deadline after which such hoarders may be imprisoned. But many stubbornly rebellious hoarders, it is charged, have evaded the order by the ruse of removing their gold to foreign banks.

"Such evaders were bitterly flayed today by ex-Senator Haggard in an address over a State-wide hook-up. Haggard named names, called spades spades; among other charges, he declared that a certain wealthy Angeleno is even now en route for Chile with a half million in gold coin aboard his yacht. Furthermore—"

"Turn that off!" shouted Porter Rice. He was advancing angrily toward the radio, his face brick red.

Val Montaigue turned the dial, shutting off the broadcast.

"It wasn't talking about you, was it, Rice?" Pomeroy inquired innocently.

Actually he had known for three days that Porter Rice had a safe full of gold on this yacht. He had, in fact, seen it brought aboard.

The other guests now sensed the fact for the first time. To whom else could the broadcast have referred? Under the sting of it, Rice stood confused before them all. They had heard him complain bitterly during the past month against what he called the unconstitutional order against private possession of gold. Many had heard him threaten to defy it.

"Jumping Jupiter!" exclaimed Oswald Clegg. "Is that why there's a safe in your stateroom, Rice?"

A sullenly defensive expression came to Rice's round face.

"Well, what of it?" he snapped peevishly. "It's mine, isn't it? I earned it, didn't I? I'll take it to Chile, or Timbucktu, or to hell, if I want to. It's nobody's business."

There was a strained silence. Finally Clegg said:

"Yes, it's your money, Rice. If you want to take the risk—"

"What risk?" demanded Porter Rice. "I got it out before the deadline, didn't I? They can't do a thing."

"I didn't mean that kind of risk," Clegg explained. "I mean the risk of having it stolen before you can get it salted away in banks at Valparaiso, Santiago, Lima, or wherever you plan to put it. For instance, suppose there's a crook on this ship!"

"There isn't," Rice retorted. "My

guests are hand-picked; so are my officers and crew."

"A stowaway?" Clegg suggested dubiously.

"We've made certain there's no stowaway aboard," Rice assured him.

Having observed that his guests did not seem disposed to brand him as an economic renegade, Rice's confusion was dissipating. His usual smug poise returned. Facing Clegg with almost expansive confidence, he challenged:

"Just for the sake of argument, let's suppose there's a thief aboard who's bent on stealing the gold. Let us even suppose that he gains admittance to my safe and gets his hands on the loot. What then? What could he do with a half million in gold?"

Most of the guests stared vacantly.

Finally Montaigue answered uncertainly—

"He'd—er—scram with it, wouldn't he?"

"Scram where?" challenged Porter Rice. "Could he dive off the deck, in midocean, with a half million in gold?"

Carter Pomeroy whistled.

"It'd sure sink him if he did," he said. "How much does a half million in gold coin weigh, Rice?"

"A ton," announced Rice triumphantly.

"A ton?" gasped Pomeroy, although for three days he had been estimating the weight at about that, and had recognized the weight as the major obstacle confronting his own plans.

"A ton?" echoed Oswald Clegg.

"Think of it! A ton!" breathed Mrs. Tartleton in genuine awe. Pomeroy knew that she had long been setting her cap for Rice.

"A ton," confirmed Rice.

His face was aglow now; avarice was swimming in his small, pale eyes.

A sigh escaped Val Montaigue.

"Do me a favor, will you, Mr. Rice? Just once in my life I'd like to see a ton of gold."

"Why not?" Porter Rice agreed heartily. "No harm in it, is there? Even if I didn't trust you, Val, I'd be glad to show you this ton of gold. Its very weight and bulk protects it. Come. If you like, all of you may come."

ALL but two of them went along. Featherstone, a blond Adonis in a braided white uniform, remained in the saloon with Estelle Nunan. Those two were young. They were more interested in each other than in a ton of gold.

Carter Pomeroy followed the group which proceeded down the passage to the owner's commodious stateroom. He was still practicing that bored look. The ton of gold seemed mildly to amuse him, nothing more. Garlow the magician, however, did not seem bored. His black eyes were keen and eager as he entered the stateroom with Pomeroy and the others.

When all were in the stateroom Rice opened the safe. It was a stout steel receptacle with a capacity of about six cubic feet. When it was open, the company saw bulging canvas bags packed within. There were forty of those sacks. Each contained twelve thousand five hundred dollars in gold coin. And each sack, as Pomeroy had calculated, was about the size of a head of cabbage.

"Take out any bag at random, Val," Rice invited grandiloquently, "and feast your eyes."

Montaigue found that he needed both hands to lift a bag from the safe. Porter Rice opened it and dumped its glittering contents on the bed.

"Imagine!" gasped Mrs. Clegg.

"It's mine," Rice exulted. He stroked it; he fondled it; he poured it through his hands. He loved it; it was his god; it was gold.

Finally it was returned to the safe, and the safe was locked.

Small good it would do Rice to lock the safe, thought Pomeroy; for one day when this safe was empty and the yacht was anchored, deserted by all save a watchman, at Rice's Long Beach pier, Carter Pomeroy had paid it a clandes-

tine visit. His fingers were as nimble as his brain. An hour of practice with that safe knob had divulged to him the proper turnings.

"You see," Porter Rice was saying when the group again entered the saloon, "it's too heavy and big to be handled by a thief. On land, if the thief had a truck, perhaps yes. But he couldn't steal it aboard a yacht in midocean."

"Couldn't do what?" asked Estelle Nunan to cover her own slight embarrassment. The returning group had caught Featherstone holding her hand.

"Couldn't steal a ton of gold," expained Clegg.

"Could you do it, Mr. Garlow?" the girl asked innocently.

The Great Garlow stroked his beard. His other hand rubbed at the scar on his cheek as he stood for a moment, his eyes closed in a pose of profound meditation. Finally he said:

"No. Even I, the Great Garlow, could not, single-handed, steal and successfully hide a ton of gold on a yacht in midocean."

"And if the Great Garlow can't do it—" Porter Rice chuckled—"it can't be done."

"AH, BUT it *can* be done," Carter Pomeroy assured himself an hour later, in the privacy of his own cabin.

Seated on his bed, he reviewed his plans step by step. The time, he decided, would be the next night—provided there was a calm sea. If by any chance there was rough weather, he'd have to postpone his coup until later on the cruise. But the Pacific at this season and in this latitude, he reflected, was seldom rough. Tonight it was smooth enough; Pomeroy could barely hear the lap of waves against the yacht's side.

His was a desperate scheme, and to succeed it must embrace one outright murder. Too, for a few night-time hours he must cause the yacht to drift, an unmanned derelict. On a calm sea that should not wreck the ship.

There were risks, of course, but the prize was worth them. A ton of gold!

Pomeroy scanned a list of the ship's company. He counted them. The owner and seven guests made eight; a captain, two deck officers, two engineers, a steward, a stewardess and a wireless man made eight more; of additional crew there were four in the deck department, three in the engineer's and three in the steward's.

"Twenty-six," counted Pomeroy. "And this will make them all equal."

He held up a quart bottle filled with a colorless, odorless, tasteless liquid. It was a drug of peculiar power and virulence, insidious, slow to act and yet one from which a victim was equally slow to revive—a nerve-numbing barbaturic preparation.

"On land or sea," Pomeroy repeated, "it makes all men equal."

He had made a study during the past three days of the routine followed by steward, mess-boy and chef. Thus it was at four o'clock the next afternoon that Pomeroy began his own operations. At five o'clock the steward would refill the water carafes in each stateroom. Charley, the mess-boy, would perform the same service in other quarters of the yacht. To every container provided for drinking water, whether forward, aft, in the engine room or on the bridge, fresh water would be supplied at five o'clock.

At four the yacht was coasting along on a sea barely less placid than glass, headed south, and about eight hundred miles due west of Guatemala. The participants in a lazy foursome of bridge in the saloon were Mrs. Clegg, Mrs. Tarleton, Val Montaigue and Captain Schultz. The Great Garlow was reclining outside in a deckchair, talking to Estelle Nunan. Featherstone was relieving the first officer on the bridge.

Pomeroy, after moving furtively along the saloon deck passage, stopped before the door of a supply closet. It was not locked, for it contained nothing except

many five-gallon jars of pure drinking water. Porter Rice, Pomeroy knew, was a prohibitionist. He would never permit liquor in any form on his yacht. And Rice, being a firm advocate of pure water, had provided for this cruise through the tropics the purest drinking water procurable in Los Angeles.

Pomeroy opened the closet. He noted that the five-gallon jar nearest the door was only two-thirds full. By all logic the steward would deplete this one before starting on another.

The schemer now produced his own quart of paralyzing drug. A third of it he poured into the nearest five-gallon water jar. Another third he poured into the next most accessible jar, in case the steward should need to use that one too.

Restoring corks to the jars, Pomeroy closed the closet door and withdrew.

It was reasonable to presume that before bedtime every person aboard would take a drink of either water or coffee. The tropic heat would, in fact, whet an appetite for liquid refreshment. He conceded that one or two among the twenty-six aboard might content themselves with coffee at supper. If so, even that coffee would be made from the treated water. Would boiling destroy the potency of the drug? It might. For that reason Pomeroy reserved a third of his dope.

An hour later he was watching furtively when the steward and mess-boy executed a daily ritual. He saw them assemble carafes from the staterooms, from the engine-room, from the chart-room, from the galley, from the saloon and from the quarters of the crew forward. He saw them pour out the small amount of stale water left over from the day before, refilling in each case with fresh water.

Shortly after five o'clock Pomeroy was fanning himself in his cabin when the steward entered. With a pretence of eagerness he took the refilled carafe and poured himself a drink. Raising the glass to his lips, he pretend to drink.

"You saved my life, Steward," he said.

"Yes, sir. In this blarsted climate, on a 'ot day like this, one needs lots of water." The steward passed on to the next cabin.

Pomeroy strolled out on the deck and circled the boat. Looking in at the saloon, he saw Charley serving water to the plump widow, Mrs. Tartleton. Pomeroy then ascended to the bridge and chatted awhile with Featherstone. He was present when Charley delivered a full carafe to the chartroom. While he was there the mess-boy served a drink to the helmsman.

Pomeroy knew, however, that there would be no immediate effect. The drug worked slowly into one's system. After one hour an imbiber would begin to feel a bit groggy. By the end of another hour his bones would be aching. Soon after that he would be stupefied, and at last lose every physical sense. The duration of the stupor would vary in individual cases, but in no case should it be less than three hours.

Pomeroy once had seen this same drug administered, in beer, to a barroom full of bums in Singapore. Every victim had been anesthetized completely, and yet all had recovered. It was not deadly. Pomeroy did not want it to be deadly. He merely wanted the yacht to himself for a few hours.

BETWEEN two and four bells he pretended to drink several times in the presence of others. At four bells he complained to Captain Schultz of a feeling of lethargy.

"So?" exclaimed Schultz. "It's these dod-blasted tropigs; they tage all the beb oud of a man." Schultz did not seem to feel any too well himself.

Supper was due at six bells, seven o'clock. Just before that hour Pomeroy stalked the galley. Covertly he waited for a moment when it was occupied only by the chef. At last he saw the mess-boy go forward on an errand. A moment later the chef stepped into his pantry. This was Pomeroy's opportun-

ity to treat the contents of a large copper percolator which he knew contained hot coffee, already boiled and ready to serve to all messes.

For that purpose he used the final third of his barbaturic solution. Retreating then to his cabin, he opened a large, brass-bound steamer trunk. In the trunk he concealed the quart bottle. While he had the trunk open he produced a flask from it and drank of pure water hidden there during the morning.

Two or three of the company did not appear at supper. Those who came seemed to be dopey. None seemed more so than Carter Pomeroy.

"If we weren't at sea," he said to Estelle Nunan, "I'd swear I'm getting malaria."

Soon he arose and went to his cabin. He was stretched on his bed when Montaigue came in. Pomeroy looked up stupidly.

"Hang it all, something's wrong," Montaigue complained. "Or have I overlooked a bet? Did somebody smuggle a case o' gin aboard and forget to give me any?"

Montaigue as yet showed no evidence of being drugged. Did that mean, Pomeroy wondered, that he'd have to tap Montaigue over the head?

"Mrs. Tarleton passed out right in the saloon," Montaigue said. "Clegg and I carried her to her cabin and then went for the stewardess. And what did we find? We found the stewardess drunk. Drunk as an owl, Pomeroy!"

"Where she get it?" Pomeroy asked thickly. Without waiting for an answer he rolled over and closed his eyes.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he heard Montaigue say. "I wonder if it's ptomaine, or some darned thing we had to eat. Don't feel any too good myself."

He went out. Pomeroy lay still for another hour. Then he arose and peered out on the deck. It was quite dark. The yacht, it seemed, had been cut down to half speed. Far up the deck he heard a confused complaint. Then he heard some one stumble.

A minute later he heard a jangle of telegraphs on the bridge.

He noted that the electric light in his cabin was growing dim. He looked at his watch. It was almost nine o'clock. He waited until the exact hour, alert to hear its announcement from the bridge. But two bells did not sound.

That in itself was fair evidence that the watch was demoralized. He went out now and staggered up the deck, faking a stupor in case any one saw him. He found Oswald Clegg stretched in a deckchair, totally unconscious. On the saloon divan he found Captain Schultz in a like condition. From above he heard a helmsman complaining groggily. Such complaints voiced by the watch both above and below would surely cause the shutting down of power and stopping the ship.

Coming abreast of Miss Nunan's stateroom, Pomeroy peered in. He was prepared, if she saw him, to talk drunkenly. But she did not see him. She lay drugged on her bed. In like state was Montaigue in the next cabin. Pomeroy passed on to inspect the magician, Garlow the Great.

Garlow's cabin door was ajar. Pomeroy stepped softly in.

"It makes all men equal." He chuckled as he looked down upon the bearded, scar-cheeked figure stretched totally unconscious on the bed.

His handiwork, he saw, had been no less successful here than elsewhere. Even the Great Garlow had passed out.

The electric lights seemed to be getting dimmer all the while. From below came no hum of the Diesels. The yacht had hove to, Pomeroy sensed, and was drifting on a smooth black sea.

Pomeroy began to worry lest he should be too late to muster a witness. He wanted to find one man who still retained a small spark of animation. It didn't matter whom. To find such a person, Pomeroy now went forward to the quarters of the crew. He found three men there, but none served his purpose. They were all down and out.

He had the same luck in the galley, at every aft cabin and on the bridge. Both the helmsman and the officer of the watch lay drugged, unconscious in the chartroom.

The yacht was temporarily a drifting derelict.

Yet a minute later, when Pomeroy staggered down steep, spiral steps to the engine-room, he found one man functioning. Two other men on the watch below were down and out. But Burke, the second engineer, was conscious. Realizing that the bridge was unresponsive, Second Engineer Burke had shut down all motive power. He wasn't going to drive the yacht unsteered through the seas.

It was just this that Pomeroy had anticipated—that the Diesel motors would be stopped by one of the last of the crew to succumb to the drug. He was now on his back, muttering to himself, almost but not quite unconscious. If Burke had not been the hardiest survivor, any one else would have served Pomeroy's purpose.

Pomeroy collapsed in a sprawl beside the second engineer.

"Gesh somebody quick," he said thickly. "Zhereza launch comin' shongside, aport."

"Lonsh, zhu shay? What lonsh?" groggily muttered Burke. "Wheresha Old Man?"

"Launch wizshout lights," insisted Pomeroy stupidly. "Garlow's zere. He's callin' launch to she port rail wizh a flash. Geshomebody."

Burke blinked.

"Whatzh Garlow want a lonsh for?" he asked, getting sleepier and less interested every instant.

Pomeroy appeared to pass out just before Burke actually did so. He lay quiet until he was sure Burke was unconscious. Then he arose and raced up to the main deck. Once more he made the rounds.

Five minutes later he had determined definitely that he was the only noncomatose person on the yacht.

THE vessel drifted; not perilously, however, because the sea was calm. In his own cabin Pomeroy provided himself with a flashlight.

His next act was to produce a plug of tobacco and bite off a generous chew. He grimaced, for it was the first time since a boyhood experiment that the lips of Carter Pomeroy had ever been so befouled.

He now opened his large, brass-bound steamer trunk and from it took a sack. He slung the sack over his shoulder and went directly to the stateroom of Porter Rice. The door, he found, was bolted on the inside.

With a chisel from his sack he whittled away a little from the door, finally making an entry for his hacksaw. With this he sawed through the bolt and entered the cabin.

Porter Rice lay on his bed, his legs dangling; he was dead to the world.

Knowing the combination, it did not take Pomeroy long to open the safe. There was an interior door, but a key from Rice's pocket took care of that. Exposed now to Pomeroy's feverish gaze were forty sacks of gold coin.

His next act was to spit tobacco juice on the rug. Such a crude gesture, he felt sure, would hardly be attributed to any of the more or less fastidious guests now cruising with Porter Rice. Only a pirate thug would do that.

Next he produced from his sack a pair of hobnailed shoes. He put them on in place of his own slippers. The soles of the hobnailed shoes were smeared with grease and oily waste such as might litter the deck of a disreputable launch. Having assumed this footgear, Pomeroy left a smudge at every step.

From the sack he now produced a pair of greasy gloves. After putting them on, whatever he touched was soiled. Deliberately he left many smears and smudges on Porter Rice's safe. He then picked up one bag of gold and stepped with it out upon the deck. His hobnails

scarred that clean swabbed wood. He walked aft with the one bag of gold, and frequently he spat tobacco juice on the deck. Descending to the after deck, he continued on another ten paces along the port rail. There he set his gold bag on the deck.

There he would leave it. He made no attempt to hide it. In fact, it was the first thing a person would see upon surveying this deck. The assumption would be, he reasoned, that all forty bags had been carried there, one being left behind in the haste of a dark getaway.

He rubbed his greasy gloves all over the rail there, as if a wearer might have climbed back and forth over it many times. With his chisel he made scratches on the rail of a character which might have been made by the grappling hooks of a pirate launch.

Returning now to Rice's cabin on the saloon deck, he again expectorated and left hobnailed tracks on the way. But, once there, he removed those shoes and tossed them into the sea. After them, into the sea, went the gloves and his quid of tobacco.

FOR the moment Pomeroy did nothing with the remaining thirty-nine bags of gold except inspect a few of them, making certain that each actually contained gold coin. Then he crept to Garlow's cabin. The magician, he made certain, was still totally unconscious. When Pomeroy shone his flashlight full into the man's eyes, there was not so much as the flicker of a lid. Even when he gave a tug at the spike of beard, there was no response.

Garlow's door gave to the deck. It was only a step across that narrow deck to the rail. Shining his flash along it, Pomeroy saw no one, either drugged or conscious. Silent as a morgue was the yacht of Porter Rice.

Assured then that no one could witness his disposal of Garlow, Pomeroy reentered the cabin. His victim weighed about one hundred and eighty pounds; Pomeroy seized his legs and dragged, rather than carried, that dead weight to the yacht's rail. With a heave and a shove he rolled it over the rail. The sound of the splash was like a pistol shot. Then again came utter silence. Pomeroy, leaning over the rail, aimed his flash downward on the water. He watched alertly on the bare chance that a sudden cold immersion might revive Garlow. But it did not. The victim did not reappear.

For several minutes Pomeroy remained there, playing his flash on the water below him. He swept it along the side of the yacht all the way to the stern, alertly watching for a hand, a desperate, upstretched arm—but there was none. Garlow was gone. Garlow's hand baggage, Pomeroy decided, must likewise be gone. Returning to the magician's cabin, he packed the man's two Gladstone bags with such essentials as he would be likely to take along on a hasty desertion of the yacht. When the bags were packed Pomeroy tossed them into the sea.

An overcoat belonging to Garlow was still hanging in the cabin. Wearing this overcoat, Garlow had boarded the yacht four days before. On that day a cool fog had overhung Los Angeles. Presumably taking flight now in the tropics, Garlow wouldn't need that overcoat. Therefore, in his haste, he might reasonably have left it behind. In its inside pocket Pomeroy planted what seemed to be the final page of a letter. The letter was written in crude, disguised handwriting. One paragraph of it read:

> Ten flashes, half a minute apart, is the signal to call us alongside. We'll keep out of sight by day, but by night we'll be hanging close to your port with glims doused.

In Garlow's cabin Pomeroy also left the quart bottle which had contained the drug. It still contained a few drops, sufficient, Pomeroy felt sure, to complete the incrimination of the wizard.

Pomeroy, now wearing his own felt

slippers and leaving no track, ascended to the boat deck. The small boat there was the one used for going ashore when the yacht was anchored in a harbor. The two big boats suspended from davits were the lifeboats. Each of these was big enough to accommodate all hands in a storm, in case waves had smashed the other one. Therefore either of them would support nineteen hundred and fifty pounds of gold.

Pomeroy had no thought of lowering a lifeboat; nevertheless he wanted the use of one. For a definite reason he chose the starboard boat. It, like the other, was covered with stout canvas, which was securely buckled over the gunwales to keep the boat from warping in the sun or filling with rain.

In that lifeboat was equipment used only in rare emergencies. In calm weather the boat was not likely to be touched, except to be inspected or painted.

Pomeroy unbuckled the canvas along the near side of it, folding it back. In the boat were three ten-gallon kegs. They were permanent accessories, always kept there to avoid the scurry of providing them on a sudden call to abandon ship. One was full of hardtack. The other two were for fresh water, the water not being in them now, but to be provided on any order to lower boats.

Pomeroy climbed into the boat. With tools from his sack he removed the heads from all three kegs. The hardtack he dumped into the sea. Each ten-gallon keg, he had calculated, would with snug packing contain thirteen bags of gold.

HE TOILED laboriously for the next hour. Thirty-nine trips he made to the stateroom of Porter Rice. He lugged one bag at a time to the starboard lifeboat. When each keg was filled, it weighed six hundred and fifty pounds. However, that made no difference, for Pomeroy did not plan to budge a single keg.

When he left them, they occupied the exact positions in which he had found them. Heads were again on the kegs. An inspecting officer, unless he actually climbed into the boat and tried to jostle one of them, would presume that the kegs contained hardtack, water, or nothing. Familiar equipment they were; they had always been there, they were still there, and Pomeroy felt reasonably certain they would remain there until he himself again molested them.

After removing every trace of his invasion he climbed out to the deck and rebuckled the canvas securely over the near gunwale.

Even this hiding place, Pomeroy knew, would not suffice in any ordinarily exhaustive search of the ship. If only gold were missing, it would surely be found. But Garlow was also missing. The real search, then, would be not for gold but for Garlow. No doubt an officer would peer into each lifeboat to see whether or not Garlow was skulking within it. Such an inspector would see the three familiar kegs. He would know that Garlow could not be hiding in a ten-gallon keg.

And even the search for Garlow would lose zest when, bit by bit, the evidence of his voluntary desertion became exposed. After that the wireless man would do all the searching, sending a hue and cry to all corners of the sea.

Pomeroy now tossed his sack of tools into the sea. In his own cabin he washed his teeth and effaced minor clews indicative of his own guilt. Then he produced a tiny vial which contained a few drops of his drug. With them he strengthened the mixture in his own carafe, and drank deeply. Thus Pomeroy himself imbibed a stronger solution than any single one of his victims.

Descending now to the engine room, he sprawled beside Second Engineer Burke. In a short while he was as genuinely drugged as any person aboard. He played himself as a final trump in his pack of tricks while the shanghaied ship drifted as it would. Coma was

complete. A breeze, finally, rustled the topgear. Waves began to whisper. One lonely bag of gold lay starkly exposed by a scratched and smeared railing. Pirates in a hurry to be off had apparently overlooked it on that dark, scuttled deck.

THE first thing Pomeroy became aware of was a hum of voices. He seemed to dream those voices, and to dream that he was being mauled and pummeled by a score of men. Finally he realized that Captain Schultz, Burke and Chief Engineer Raegan were shaking him. They were dousing him with water.

"Come out of it, Mr. Pomeroy. Please sir, come alive," Raegan was pleading.

"Vott is this beeziness, Misder Bomroy?" Schultz was demanding. "Vott you say aboud a launch?"

Pomeroy, too genuinely dizzy to talk, only blinked at them. Again they shook him. Again Burke doused him with water. At last Pomeroy groaned, rubbed his head, sat up and stared dumbly about. The Diesels were purring now; he sensed that the yacht was being propelled half speed ahead.

Schultz himself was still dizzy. His wits were scattered. His face presented the aspect of one who has been slugged, outraged, cheated, insulted and dragged at the end of a rope.

"Vott chu say aboud a launch, Misder Bomroy?" he pleaded tearfully.

Pomeroy was saved an answer by First Officer Chopple, who at this moment came reeling down from above. He was only a little farther out of his stupor than Schultz. Stumbling up now, he gasped:

"We're scuttled. We've been boarded, sir. Mr. Rice's gold has been stolen from the yacht."

"Vott? All of it?" screamed Schultz.

"All but one bag," said Chopple.

Schultz was like a madman. He raved. He tore his hair.

"How do you know ve've been boarded?" he shrieked.

"Come have a look yourself, sir," invited Chopple.

"Mr. Pomeroy, did you see a launch alongside?" insisted Raegan.

"A launch, or cutter, or something," Pomeroy breathed in a what-difference-does-it-make whisper.

"Vott time you see it?" shrieked Schultz.

"I'm not sure," Pomeroy said. He did not need to fake the stupor in which he spoke. "I'm not even sure I saw a launch. But I saw a dark shape closing in aport. Garlow stood on the afterdeck blinking a flash."

"Garlow?" bawled Schultz.

"That's another thing, sir," reported Chopple. "Garlow's missing."

"It must have happened at about four bells," Burke offered, glancing toward the engine room clock which now indicated 3:25 A. M. "Anyway, that was when Mr. Pomeroy told me about it. Then he passed out. A minute or two later I passed out myself."

Schultz caressed his aching head.

"It means five hours vithout officers or grew," he groaned. "Come, Misder Jobble."

Puffing and panting, he climbed the steep stairs with Chopple at his heels.

HALF an hour later Pomeroy, supported by Burke and the steward, ascended to his cabin. As he sprawled on the bed there he was still groping in a fog of dizziness. Until dawn he knew very little about what went on. For Pomeroy, being the last man drugged, was naturally the last man fully to revive.

After dawn he lay there staring dully at a succession of callers who came to talk about the raid. To all he told the same story he had told Schultz—no more, no less.

"I can't be sure it was a launch, but I think it was," he said when the steward brought him breakfast. "Anyway, Garlow was blinking a light."

"They orter 'ang that Garlow, they should, sir," moaned the steward. He

wore a bandage about his head, and beneath that he had the pallor of a ghost. "And it was a launch, all right, sir. Charley, the mess-boy, 'e saw it too."

Hearing that, Pomeroy felt a thrill of exultation. For such luck as this he had cherished hardly more than a vague hope. There had been no launch. Yet a corroborating witness was willing to swear that he, too, had seen one.

Pomeroy had vaguely hoped for such luck. He knew human nature; he had watched its vagaries operate before, in crises of stress and emotion. Now he recalled the great Long Beach earthquake, which he himself had survived only a few months before, and after which he had heard many normally truthful survivors offer grossly inaccurate testimony.

He knew that if twenty-six people are telling each other about the brick walls which almost fell on them, some one who wasn't even near a brick wall will come forward with the most desperate escape of all. It is the contagion of dramatic recitals, exchanged hysterically among survivors, Pomeroy reasoned, which makes such testimonies almost inevitable.

The psychology in Charley's case was, he presumed, that Charley, amid a maelstrom of rumors that a launch had been seen, and seeing abundant evidence that pirates had actually boarded the yacht, had simply succumbed to the human craving for the limelight.

"The beauty of it is," Pomeroy exulted to himself, "that when any one ever tells one of those stories, he always sticks to it."

In mid-morning Val Montaigue came in. He was disheveled and excited; for the first morning in years he had failed to shave.

"How does Rice take it?" Pomeroy asked him with a wan grin.

"Like castor oil," Montaigue told him. "He's crazy mad; he's sittin' in his cabin right now with one bag of gold beside him. He's sore at everybody, especially at Captain Schultz."

"What's he got against Schultz?"

"He claims that if Schutz had exercised proper vigilance it couldn't have happened."

"Did you see the launch, Val?"

"No, but the mess-boy did. He said it was about a fifty-footer. The last thing the kid saw, it seems, was this launch swinging broadside to the port rail aft. There was a big brute standin' on its deck with a sawed-off shotgun."

Pomeroy gave silent thanks that Charley hadn't made it a cutlass.

"Their tracks are plain from Rice's cabin to the rail where they hooked us," Montaigue explained. "The only break Rice gets is that they overlooked one bag; it seems they stacked the loot back there, ready to load; but in a quick getaway in the dark they left one sack on the deck."

"We seem to be making full speed ahead," Pomeroy said.

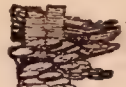
"Yeah, but north instead of south. We're heading straight for home, sweet home. Why not? The cruise has gone sour, hasn't it?"

From the first Pomeroy had counted on just that. Why should Porter Rice continue on to Chile after losing the gold he had planned to store in Chilean vaults? The women guests, too, would be frightened, and insist on going home.

"Are they dead sure Garlow's not aboard?" prodded Pomeroy.

Montaigue's smile was patronizing.

"Not a chance," he said. "Why, in his cabin they found the bottle he doped us with. They even found a letter which proves he planned the clean-up before we left California."



POMEROY, after the caller left him, basked in his triumph. The coup had succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. They had doubtless already reported the piracy by wireless. And now they were steering gloomily home. Eventually the yacht, Pomeroy knew, would be moored alongside Rice's private wharf near Long Beach. It was always

kept there when not on cruise. And Pomeroy knew that the starboard lifeboat would overhang that wharf.

Authorities would come aboard and ask questions. There would be an anxious wait for reports from foreign ports. The Navy would be consulted and, if possible, enlisted in a wide search for Garlow and the gold.

In the bitter end all guests and the crew would disperse. Only a watchman would be left aboard the yacht. Then Pomeroy, on any convenient dark night, could come for his loot. He would park a light truck near the wharf. Slipping aboard in disguise, he would rap the watchman over the head. After that, bag by bag, he could load his truck.

When the steward brought lunch to his cabin Pomeroy had but small appetite for it.

"The rest are the same way, sir," the steward smirked. "Even the Old Man ain't got 'is legs yet."

"You mean Mr. Rice?"

"No, sir, I mean Cap'n Schultz. 'E's sick in more ways than one. Mr. Rice fired 'im, 'e did, told 'im to get orf and stay orf as soon as we drop anchor at the 'ome wharf."

"But Schultz couldn't help it," protested Pomeroy.

"Of course 'e couldn't, sir. But Mr. Rice is ravin'. 'E's wild. 'E'd be tearin' 'is 'air, if 'e 'ad any."

Porter Rice had calmed down a trifle when, in midafternoon, Pomeroy ventured into the saloon; but he was still incensed. Pomeroy stretched himself on the divan and watched Rice pace back and forth. Every now and then the millionaire burst forth into maledictions against Garlow.

"He's a devil!" he blurted to Oswald Clegg who sat nearby, gloomily playing solitaire. "I ought to have had more sense than to bring him along," he added shrilly.

"But you didn't know he was a devil," Clegg protested soothingly. "You thought he was just a magician, and you wanted him to entertain us."

"A magician!" Porter Rice echoed bitterly. "He's more than a magician. And I knew it. After a stunt I saw him pull off once, in Florida, I ought to have had more sense than to bring him aboard with a ton of gold."

"Pulled off a pretty slick trick, did he?" Clegg inquired.

"A trick! Call it a trick if you want to. That man's a devil, I tell you, on land or sea. I helped drive the nails in that coffin myself."

"What coffin?"

"It was on Pete Corning's yacht off Florida," Rice said. "The Great Garlow—damn him!—was entertaining the guests. At high noon one day he lay down in a coffin and let us nail on the lid. When he was boxed tight, we bound that coffin with ropes, weighted it with lead and heaved it into the sea. It went down like a rock in water one hundred fathoms deep. But in ten minutes Garlow's head appeared. He swam to the yacht and came aboard."

"The devil he did!" exclaimed Clegg.

"The devil he did and the devil he is!" barked Rice. "The wonder to me is, this time, that he bothered to hire that launchful of thugs. Why didn't he just waft the ton of gold through the air to some cave a thousand miles on shore?"

"Humph!" Clegg grunted.

Pomeroy arose and went dizzily to the deck. There, leaning on the rail, he stared at the sea. In spite of himself he was worried about Garlow. According to Rice the man had once escaped from a sealed coffin sunk deep in the sea. From an impassable predicament he had regained the deck of a yacht. If once, why not again?

THAT evening no one else was in a much better temper than Schultz. But by the next morning spirits, except those of owner and skipper, had visibly revived.

"What an adventure!" Estelle Nunan whispered to Pomeroy out of Rice's hearing. "To be actually boarded by

pirates in midocean! I'm positively thrilled."

"You weren't so darned thrilled this time yesterday," Montaigue reminded her. "But it's something to write home about, at that."

"I don't think it's polite to be thrilled," Mrs. Tarleton pouted, "after poor Porter lost all that money."

"Serves him right," retorted Mrs. Clegg. "He should have exchanged that gold for currency, like the Government told him to."

"Teach him a lesson!" agreed Clegg.

All effects of the anesthesia had worn off. Mrs. Clegg was feeling well enough to recruit a bridge game; and Miss Nunan, when Featherstone strolled in, was quite equal to the task of bewitching him.

At 11:00 A. M. the wireless man entered, reporting that a suspicious looking launch had been sighted off a lower Mexico port. His information was that it had been running without lights at night.

"It might be Garlow," he said. "Again, it might only be a smuggler, or rum runner, or something."

A dozen other rumors of that nature arriving over the air during the last twenty-four hours had come to naught. But they had all been grist to Pomeroy's mill of illusion. They helped to magnetize the search to faraway corners of the sea.

Porter Rice now entered the saloon by the aft entrance. Captain Schultz came in from forward. They did not speak to each other.

The assembled group, Pomeroy noted, was the same audience which, sixty hours ago, had watched the Great Garlow pull rabbits from a hat. Idly he mentioned that fact to Schultz.

"If I ever ged hold of that sgoundrel," Schultz snorted, "I'll bull rabbids from his peard!"

"Oh, Captain, my cabin's a perfect sight," Mrs. Clegg called from the bridge table. "Can't you have the steward straighten it?"

"He's maging the rounds now," Schultz said. "Yesterday morning he was up in the air, like the resd of us, and he led his work go by the poards."

He had barely spoken when the steward appeared. He came cat-footing across the saloon and faced Schultz.

"Something's wrong, sir," he said, "in one of the cabins."

"Vell, vott is it?" Schultz demanded.

"I've been tidying up, shipshape, this morning," the steward said in a strangely disturbed voice. "Just now, in one of the cabins, I tried to move a trunk in order to sweep under it."

"Vell?"

"I couldn't move it, sir."

"Vy not?"

"I even called the mess-boy," the steward insisted. "Both of us, 'eaving together, couldn't budge it. Then we called in two deckhands, but all four of us couldn't move that blarsted trunk."

"Vott's the matter? Vas it nailed to the floor?"

"It's not nailed to the floor, sir. But it might as well be. It weighs a ton."

"A dun?" shouted Schultz, jumping up and staring pop-eyed at the steward.

"A ton?" Porter Rice cried shrilly. "You mean to say there's a trunk on this ship that weighs a ton?"

"Not an ounce less," the steward affirmed.

Pomeroy felt suddenly cold and old. Why, he worried, should a trunk weigh a ton?

"A dun of gold, you think?" Schultz was shouting. "It gouldn't be. Only yesderday I searched every trunk on the shib."

"Come, sir, and I'll show you," the steward insisted.

He led the captain toward the saloon deck cabins. Rice followed. So did Pomeroy. In fact, every one trailed along except Estelle Nunan and the second officer, who remained seated cozily on the saloon divan.

The steward, with a gallery trailing him, stopped at the cabin of Carter Pomeroy. Pomeroy felt every eye fixed

on him. A crimson wave, he knew, was flooding his face. And yet he could conceive no reason why his own trunk should weigh a ton.

With Rice, Schultz and the steward, Pomeroy stepped inside his cabin. The others, emitting a buzz of whispers, remained on the deck.

"That's it, sir." The steward pointed unerringly at a brass-bound steamer trunk which had Pomeroy's name lettered on its top. No one knew better than Pomeroy that it was his trunk. The key was in his pocket. The evening before he had taken a fresh shirt from the trunk, and at that time the entire contents had not weighed more than eighty pounds.

Yet now, when Rice and Schultz together pushed against the trunk, they failed to budge it.

"Vott's in it?" Schultz demanded of Pomeroy.

"My clothing and nothing else," Pomeroy said. He was, however, braced for a shock. Something was wrong about the trunk. What could it be?

"Your gey, Misder Bomroy." Schultz extended a fat hand.

POMEROY took the key from the pocket of his trousers. He handed it to Schultz, who opened the trunk.

All saw that the trunk contained not one shred of clothing. Some two score bags were there, however. At a glance Porter Rice recognized his own bags of gold. Pomeroy felt weak, but steadied himself. His mind tried to function. How those bags got there he hadn't the foggiest idea. The only certain thing was that they were there, in his own cabin, in his own trunk. The key was in his own pocket. It was a devastating case against him.

"Vell?" Schultz was demanding sternly of him.

"I know nothing about it," Pomeroy answered evenly.

Then, to assemble his wits, he stepped out on the deck. To avoid the group congregated there, he went forward to the saloon. He wanted to be alone—and think. But they would not let him be alone. The others, like a pack of hounds in full cry, were at his heels. The leader of the pack was Schultz.

When they cornered him in the saloon Schultz shouted:

"So? You sdeal a dun of gold, vott? You shanghai my shib and mage me lose my chob? I pud you in irons. Pud him in irons, Misder Jobble."

First Officer Chopple dashed away for handcuffs. Pomeroy, at bay with his back to the saloon wall, sought frantically for a defence. Unless he could explain that trunk of gold he was doomed. The guilt of Garlow's murder hung like a black pall over him.

"I know nothing about it," he said cautiously to Schultz. "Are you crazy? Or do you think I am? If I'd stolen the gold, would I pack it in my own trunk?"

"You didn't," Schultz retorted, "until after ve'd searched your trunk. Firsd you pud it someplace else; then, after everything vas safe, you pud it in your trunk."

Pomeroy blustered.

"Absurd! Idiotic!" he said doggedly. "Last night, while I slept, some one must have—"

"So?" Schultz cut in with scathing scorn. "Somebody else pud it in your trunk, vott? Maybe it was the birates you say you saw poarding the shib!"

"He's a proved liar, all right," Porter Rice yelled as he raced in belatedly to join the group facing Pomeroy. "He started that story about pirates. And the very fact that the gold is still aboard proves that there were no pirates."

"But Charley saw them too," Pomeroy pleaded desperately.

"Jarley, he reads so tam many novels," Schultz derided, "he maybe see thousand birates if somepody sdards dalking aboud them. And it was you, Bomeroy, who sdarded dalking aboud birates."

Chopple, Pomeroy saw, was pressing forward with handcuffs. In a moment

more the steel cuffs were snapped securely on his wrists. Even then Pomeroy kept his face. Never, he resolved, would he confess. Let them accuse, let them bully, let them exert whatever pressure—but through it all he would swear his innocence.

"Speag oud, Bomeroy," Schultz was insisting. "You lied about the birates, and the gold is in your trunk. So you might as well gonfess."

Stiff-lipped denials were all he could get from Pomeroy.

"If he won't tell you, *I will,*" a voice intruded suddenly from the deck door. "He's a thief and a would-be murderer. First he drugged the ship. Then he threw the Great Garlow into the sea."

The voice stunned every occupant of the saloon. Pomeroy stared, his eyes almost popping with mingled fascination and horror. Framed in the doorway stood Garlow.

THOUGH dressed exactly as Pomeroy had last seen him, the magician's clothing was now dripping wet. He was pale, and quite suggested a dead man disgorged by the sea. Yet he was magnificent, his composure superb. His command of his audience was absolute. Never in his career had the Great Garlow made such an entrance.

With theatrical dignity he advanced to the center of the saloon. He posed there for a moment, holding them in his spell. All were awed, fascinated, breathbound. But it was into Pomeroy that his glittering black eyes burned. Then, as the magician took one harrowingly slow step after another toward him, Pomeroy shrank back as from a ghost.

"Where—where did you come from?"

A grim and triumphant smile twisted Garlow's mouth. His tones were hollow.

"From the land of the dead, where you yourself sent me," he said. "Pomeroy, you tried to murder me. You tried to fix the guilt of this devilish scheme on me. You failed in both. Pomeroy, I know all the facts—the entire plot!"

"How—how?" stuttered Pomeroy.

"You forget—" the magician's voice held high scorn—"that I am the Great Garlow."

He turned to Porter Rice.

"Mr. Rice, I am going to make Pomeroy an offer. I want you to agree. Will you?"

Dazedly the millionaire nodded.

"After all," Garlow continued quietly, "no murder was actually committed, and the gold has been recovered. So I propose that we let Pomeroy choose his own fate. If he writes a full confession, we'll put him ashore, at liberty, on the desert Mexico coast. If not, he goes on to California to stand trial for shanghaiing the ship. What do you say, Pomeroy?"

Pomeroy's eyes furtively took in the ring of hostile faces. Almost eagerly he said—

"Can I depend on that, Garlow?"

"Garlow is infallible," said the magician. He addressed the skipper. "Captain, have him taken to his cabin. Get him pen and ink and take his confession. Keep close watch on him. I can't say that I trust *him.*"

When First Officer Chopple had removed Pomeroy, the magician's remaining audience was still in something of a stupor of surprise. It was the pudgy little millionaire who broke the tension. He managed to gasp:

"Were you drugged like the rest of us? And did Pomeroy throw you into the sea?"

"He did, Mr. Rice," Garlow affirmed forcefully, "in the same sense that you and a group of friends once threw me into the sea. That time I returned to the deck. If then, why not now?"

"Bud id's imbossible!" croaked Schultz.

"You forget," repeated the magician, "that I am the Great Garlow."

He laughed his professional laugh.

"Folks, I'm going to explain. In fact, I'm going to do what it's my custom never to do—give away one of my prize illusions. I *was* overcome by Pomeroy's drug. I happened to be in the hold at

the time, going through my trunk for a prop in the act I was going to show you. There I was overcome by the drug. I passed out. When I regained consciousness I heard voices. Some of the crew, seated on a hatch, were reviewing what had happened. By giving ear I got every known fact.

"I knew I was supposed to be missing, and determined to remain that way. When I got the chance, I slipped to my cabin, and suddenly the whole thing dawned on me."

"What dawned on you?" interrupted Porter Rice.

"All in good time, my good sir. My deductions made me conclude that the loot was stored in Pomeroy's trunk, so I crept up to his cabin. Clever rascal, Pomeroy. He'd drugged himself too and was sleeping like the dead. His trunk was locked. I found the key in his trousers pocket. The gold, though, was not in the trunk. But it should be, I decided. So I put it in his trunk."

"From where?" inquired Schultz.

"From three ten-gallon kegs in a lifeboat," the magician explained; adding quickly: "Do not look so pained, Captain Schultz. You yourself would have searched those kegs if you had had my advantage, which was definite knowledge that Pomeroy had lied about the pirates. My own reasoning ran like this: He left a plain trail to the port rail of the lowest deck, a trail he evidently wanted you to follow; therefore the true trail would be in an opposite direction. So I went to the starboard rail of the highest deck, which is the boat deck. There before me loomed the starboard lifeboat. Naturally I looked into it, and had merely to push against one of the kegs to know that it was full of gold."

Porter Rice frowned and said:

"But what I don't understand is how you knew Pomeroy was the culprit. How did you?"

"Because there were no pirates."

"And how did you know that?"

"Because pirates wouldn't have tossed my dummy overboard."

"Dummy!" ejaculated Porter Rice. "I don't get you at all."

"You will in a moment," said the magician. "You once saw the Great Garlow thrown into the sea, did you not, Mr. Rice? You saw me sink. You'd swear to that, wouldn't you?"

"Yes."

"But the fact is," continued Garlow, "you and your friends only *seemed* to nail me in that coffin. What you actually sealed in the coffin was an effigy of precisely my own coloring, weighted to conform exactly with my own weight, and dressed entirely like myself. Every detail, such as shoes, tie, scar, beard and mustache, was an accurate replica. That model, sealed in a coffin, sank to the bottom of the sea. I, in the meantime, slipped overboard far down the deck and swam under water to emerge where the coffin was seen to sink."

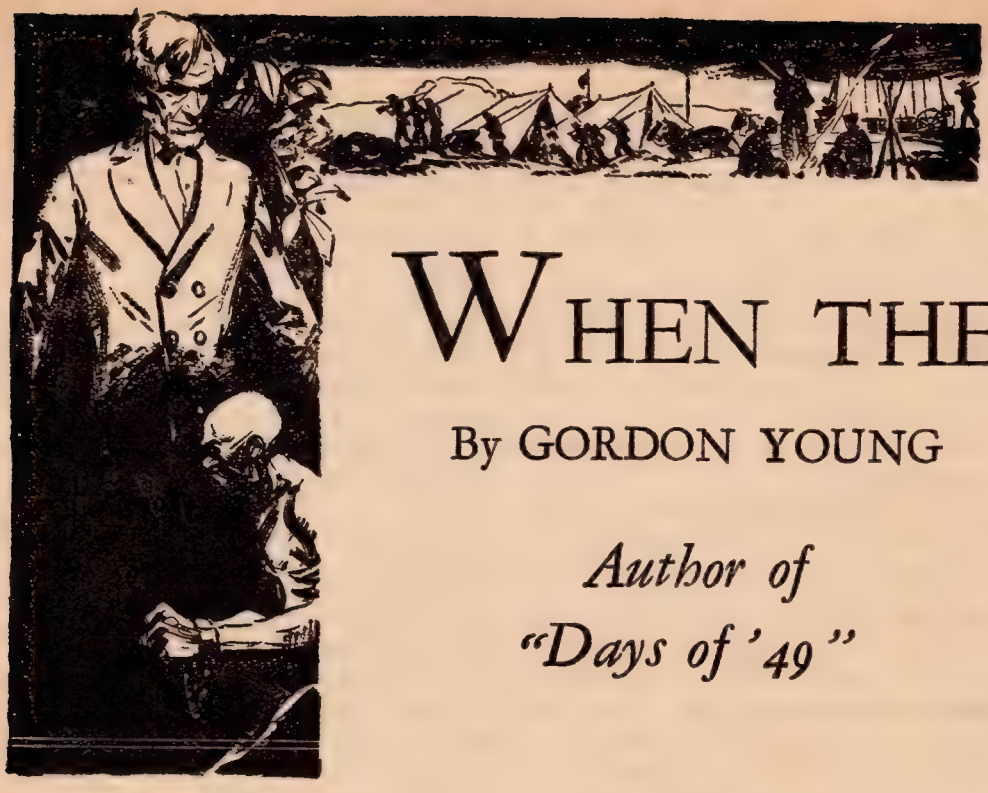
"Ah!" exclaimed Rice. "I begin to see."

"I thought so," said the Great Garlow, "As I said, when I got to my cabin after being drugged, I began to see too. I had been preparing to do the coffin trick again. I'd left the dummy lying on the bed, and now it was gone. This puzzled me till I remembered that Pomeroy had claimed that he'd seen me signaling the yacht. Evidently he intended to get rid of me by tossing me overboard. Only he seemed to have been fooled by my perfect dummy. He consigned it to the waves. Now the pirates wouldn't have tossed the dummy into the sea, would they? Therefore, the man who started the story about pirates and tried to murder me had stolen the gold himself."

Porter Rice ran over and shook the magician's hand delightedly.

"Garlow," he said, "I'm awfully indebted to you; and I can say, and I am sure all my friends here will agree with me, that this is the greatest act that you ever put on."

"Garlow," said the magician modestly, twisting a damp mustache, "is always great."



WHEN THE

By GORDON YOUNG

Author of "Days of '49"

CHAPTER I

APRIL, 1861

ONE morning near the middle of April, 1861, a tall man, middle aged and haggard, landed on the levee at New Orleans. He wore an old buckskin vest, a wide felt hat and costly boots with floppy ears and high heels. As he walked slowly in the crowd he looked about with perplexed glances. Though unmistakably a plainsman, he had the bearing of one who knew the city well, yet was astonished at the excitement, the strange new noises and bustle.

All along the waterfront rose the stormy clatter of ships' carpenters and the dim thunder of sledges on iron—the hurrying of work with purposeful haste. Shouting men pressed with jostling elbows through groups of other men who stood in clusters, gesticulating. There was a ring of glee in all voices, and one recurrent word: "War . . . war . . . war."

Sedately dressed merchants spoke with nervous loudness to calm eyed, strong jowled seamen, who answered with an English accent and shifted their quids with slowly waggling jaws. The talk was of cotton and Liverpool; but *war* was intoned with hopeful eagerness, falling vocally like the stroke of the far sledges on iron. The clatter of the caulkers' hammers had the sound of distant musketry.

The plainsman stopped face to face with an elderly gentleman in frock coat and tall hat.

"Has it come?"

"No, sir, not yet; but it must come! Any hour, sir! The South will be free or fight, sir!" The elderly gentleman asked, approvingly, "You, sir, are a Texan?"

"Yes."

The elderly gentleman tucked his gold

BRAVEST TREMBLED

Beginning a Six-Part Novel

knobbed cane under his arm and rubbed his fine soft hands together.

"A noble State, sir, and loyal!"

He bowed as if in personal gratitude. The rich old merchant was sensitive to social nuances and felt that this man, in spite of his rough clothes, was a gentleman—haughty, high tempered and rash, as a Southern gentleman should be.

The Texan went on his way, striding through the bustling streets.

Before doorways, from windows, on improvised staffs above roofs, hung the State flag of Louisiana. From time to time some drunken man bawled—

"'Rah fo' Jeff!"

Hurrying men grinned, nodding. Women of fashion, sheltered from the Springtime sun under parasols, smiled.

THE Texan entered the headquarters of General Randolph Lanister, C. S. A, who, until recently, had been merely Colonel Lanister, Retired, U. S. A.

The anteroom was crowded with men, roughly dressed and rough handed. They talked in amiable excitement—swearing, smoking, chewing, spitting. Tobacco smoke sifted overhead like a trivial symbol of war clouds. Voices hummed. Detached words on uplifted tones were heard fragmentarily in the babble.

"War . . . war . . . war—"

"Good ol' Jeff Davis—"

"England 'll have to help us Southrons or starve fo' cotton—"

"They'll be no war! Yanks won't fight—"

"One Suthnah kin whop five Yanks! Ax the sarge heah!"

"Ah been way up an' down the riveh a heap, Pete, an' Ah ain't neveh seed no five Yanks Ah thought yo' c'd whop!" a lanky riverman drawled with a critical glance at the puny blow-hard.

Cackling laughter followed. A prodding thumb or two struck Pete's thin ribs.

The fat sergeant grinned; but he wanted all men to be in a brave, amiable mood. So he slapped Pete's back and said heartily:

"Neveh yo' mind, Petey. They 's heaps o' Yanks be glad fo' to run from you!"

The Texan paused at the door, pushed up the brim of his hat and glanced without interest at the men. He went directly to the sergeant, tapped his shoulder and said something in a low voice.

The sergeant beamed with respectfulness.

"Yes, suh! Come this way, suh! The lieutenant right in heah 'll take you to 'im, suh!"

The sergeant pushed men aside, clear-

ing a way to the door. He opened it with much the same air as if for the general himself. He glanced lingeringly at the stranger's back as he closed the door and for a moment continued to stare at the closed door.

A handsome young aide, with a jangling, dangling sword, arose from behind a desk and asked—

"What can I do for you, my good fellow?"

The Texan stood stock-still and stared gloomily, as if seeing something in the dark, handsome features that he did not like. Surprised, half asking, yet affirming, he said—

"You are a Willamotte."

The lieutenant smiled, pleased at being recognized. His family was noted for its handsome men, and especially for its beautiful women.

"Yes, I am Lieutenant Willis Willamotte."

With a quick twitch of his hand the Texan brought down the brim of his hat and peered from under it with a hard look.

"I want to see the colonel!"

"You no doubt mean the general!" the aide suggested with a hint of rebuke.

"I mean my brother, sir!"

Lieutenant Willamotte drew back as if slapped, and his face grew red.

"Then y-you are Wallace Lanister?"

"I am!"

Lieutenant Willamotte drew himself up proudly; his tone was cold and his hands were clinched so tightly that the nails scarred his palms.

"I shall tell the general that you are here."

GENERAL LANISTER came hurrying with hands outstretched to welcome his brother.

"You are here sooner than I expected from your letter."

He put an arm over his brother's shoulder and led him along a hall to a small office in which was a desk piled with letters and papers arranged in neat and orderly fashion.

"I have only these straight, hard chairs so visitors won't be too comfortable! Take mine there at the desk. You look—why, what's the matter, Wallace?"

The Texan flung his hat at the desk, knocking off some of the papers. He scowled and pulled against the affectionate hand that urged him toward the padded chair; then, glancing backward at the closed door, he gestured angrily.

"What the hell are you doing with that snake-headed Willamotte on your staff?"

"Oh, please, please! Come now! We are right on the verge of war. This is no time to remember old quarrels."

"I remember they never had reason to quarrel with you! You took their side and—"

There was no stopping this hot-tempered brother; so, with the look of one enduring much pain, the general listened. He knew his brother's courage and honesty too well to be angered. The general was a calm, kindly man, and just.

When a pause came he said:

"Personal quarrels—" and flung out his hand as if flinging them away. "We Southerners must now band together, a solid South, and face the North!"

"He's old Willie's son, isn't he? Looks like him, too. Forget, hell! *He* remembers well enough that I once horsewhipped his father!"

"And it was a terrible thing to do!"

"Good Lord, I meant it to be! A cowardly lot, all of them."

"They are not," said the general firmly. "But please let us—"

"Our family's always had trouble with them, and always will have. That halfbreed nigger sister of his—" the Texan gestured vaguely in the direction of Lieutenant Willamotte. "Laura—wasn't that her name? Why, just a couple of years ago you came damn near having her marry into the family, didn't you?"

"But it wasn't in any way her fault and—"

"No, but it was the Willamotte's fault for breeding white niggers! What ever became of her?"

The general shook his head. Perhaps he did not know; perhaps he was indicating that he would not say. He moved the hat on the desk, stooped to gather up the scattered papers and tried to change the subject.

"How is Rand? Did he come with you?"

The Texan was a stubborn man. He knew very well his brother wanted to switch the talk, and he flung up his head with a look of challenge that the general had known and dreaded from boyhood.

"Do the Willamottes still breed their white niggers for—"

"One moment, Wallace!" said the general sharply, lifting his hand. "We have to come to a clear understanding about one thing before I can let you go on like this!"

"What is it?"

"These are woeful times, when the nation is splitting and even families are divided. And your quarrel with Willamotte was over slavery, so—"

"I just told him what I thought of his damn white niggers, and I didn't like the way he answered!"

"I know, I know. But you never liked slavery, Wallace. It's now over twenty-five years since you said you'd be damned if you longer remained a slave-owner."

"You're right. Said if I must own cattle, I'd own such as went on four legs. So I sold out to you."

"I have never asked you a personal question like this before, Wallace. Was it your Northern wife who turned you against owning negroes?"

"Said she'd never marry a slave-owner, if that's what you mean."

"But how do you feel now?"

"How do I feel? The same as always. Why do you ask—what are you driving at?"

"Wallace, the cause of this war—if war comes—is slavery. The meddling North is determined to—"

"I don't care what the cause of the war is. I'm Southern to the core of me." He stopped, set his jaws, swallowed; then he said savagely, like a fierce man who speaks in the midst of suffering, "But my boy is going North."

"Rand?"

"Yes."

"But why? Texas is loyal, and so are all Lanisters!"

"His mother—Oh, I couldn't make you understand unless you knew her well. She raised him like one of her folks, and that's the way the boy sees things."

"But Rand's *your* son too."

"Yes, but it's not the same thing. He respects me, but he loved her. And she knew this trouble was coming. She was a strange woman, Randolph. She had an insight few of us have. And when she fell sick, I guess her horror of this war hastened her end. She used to have long talks with the boy. She dreaded the idea that her only son might fight the men of her family—her brothers and their sons. God, could I quarrel or argue with her when she lay dying? We never quarreled in our lives."

"She wanted you to betray the South?"

"No, but she made Rand promise to go North."

"Fight against his family and his own father!"

"You don't know what you're saying. She never dreamed that I would fight for the South. I've always cussed out owning niggers as much as any Abolitionist!"

The general nodded, murmuring in regret—

"That is true."

"And she never thought of the Louisiana Lanisters as a part of the family."

"Never visited us." The general went on nodding as if beginning to understand fully.

"Rand grew up with her parents almost as much as with me. They talked politics to him from the time he was a

child. I never did. And he's stubborn as hell, Rand is. I can't do anything with him when he gets a notion about something. He won't get mad or argue much. He just won't budge!"

The general meditated.

"But how can a mere boy like Rand have a strong sentimental devotion to a political idea like the Union?"

"Well, he's got it! Rand's grandfather is really a fine old gentleman, damn him! You see, Rand's mother and her family are Northern, but not blasted Yankees. They are vaguely related to Andrew Jackson. And Rand has been brought up to think that Old Hickory was the greatest man that ever lived!"

"A great man," the general admitted, "and Southern!"

"But he would be a damned traitor today!" said the Texan hotly. "You know, when South Carolina first tried to secede thirty years ago, old Jackson, then President, said 'No State can leave this Union,' and sent troops. Other Southern States didn't back her up, as they are doing now. So South Carolina had to give in. Rand says that what was right for Old Hickory to do then is right for Lincoln to do now. And when Rand thinks he is right, nobody else's ideas count!"

"Conditions have changed in the last thirty years," said the general.

"You can't change Rand. At least, I can't. I love that boy; but somehow I have never been close to him like his mother, or even his grandparents."

"They knew you were loyally Southern. They turned your own son against you, Wallace."

"Don't say things like that! I didn't think there could be war. The fact is, I didn't really know myself just how I would feel if war did come. I let them think that if war came I would simply stay out of it."

"You have talked it over with him—calmly?"

"Begged, argued and damned him! No use. Stubborn as a mule."

He dropped on to a straight backed chair and leaned forward, elbows on knees.

THE general pulled at his silken beard and brooded. Rand was his own namesake. A self-reliant, honest boy—not polished by tutors like the general's children, but with a steady look and a smiling mouth. He had done a man's work with men from childhood. The general understood why this rash and impetuous father could not influence a boy like Rand. It was the Texan's way to assert angrily instead of reasoning; so, however Rand loved his father, he could not have much confidence in the rightness of his father's viewpoint.

The general sighed and walked across the room. The floor squeaked. He had never before noticed that the boards in this room squeaked. He opened a drawer quietly and took out a box of cigars.

"Smoke?"

The Texan, as if awakened, glanced at the box, selected a cigar, bit the end and stuck it in a corner of his mouth. He leaned forward to the match his brother held. He continued to lean forward, looking fixedly at nothing. The cigar went out.

"Where is Rand now?"

"I sent him and old Bill Raze to Baton Rouge with cattle and then came here for a talk with you. Made him promise to come along to the plantation in a day or two. He balked like hell, but gave in—promised. So he'll come. I want you to talk to him. He likes you. I can't believe he will leave your house to go North and fight us!"

"But how can I influence him, if you can't?"

"I don't think he believes yet that I will join a Southern army and actually fight. He knows that you and his cousins will. That ought to bring it home to him. By God, if he goes North, he's no longer a son of mine!"

"Then you would have him break his promise?"

"Yes!" said the Texan. "He was born

in the South and bears an old Southern name. He can't go North without being a damned traitor."

"Rand is a fine boy." The general took the cigar from his mouth and stared at the red tip. "He will do what he thinks is right. Nobody can do better than that!"

"Would you call one of your sons a fine boy if he went North?"

"There are honest men in the North just as—"

"Damn few that are Southern born! And see here, if we can't persuade him to stay, why can't you—won't you—arrest him? Hold him as a prisoner of war or something?"

"I can, yes." The general looked through the dusty window as he said, "But I won't. That would be betrayal. He is coming in the confidence of our affections, trustingly. If he wishes he must be permitted to go his way. And go he shall!"

"I'll curse him out of my sight!"

"And I," said the general gravely, "will give him a pass, safe conduct, and an escort if need be."

CHAPTER II

THE FAMILY

THE following Sunday morning Rand Lanister rode up to the house on the general's plantation with Bill Raze, a shaggy old fellow with broad, stooped shoulders and a tangled beard. Against Mr. Raze's leg was a long, heavy rifle and at his belt hung a Bowie knife. His soiled buckskin blouse was fringed at the bottom, but the fringe was nearly worn away. From boyhood he had been a frontiersman, hunter, guide and Indian fighter.

A negro came shuffling up lazily to take the horses. He grinned and bowed to Rand, whom he remembered from a visit of two or three years before; but he gazed in wonder at Mr. Raze.

"Ob all de folks dat de Lord lub!" said Noah. "Ef it ain't young Massa Ran'! How is you, sah? All de folks am gone tew church. De young massas fo' tew pray dat wah it come! De ol' gineral tew pray dat it don'! 'Spects tew bring lots ob comp'ny home fo' dinnah. We done kilt tew doz'n chickens, yas, sah! Ma'll be joyed fo' tew see you-uns, sah, yassah!"

The negress Dinah, housekeeper under Mrs. Lanister's gentle régime, met them on the veranda. She was big and tall, carried herself with unconscious dignity, and wrinkled her face into welcoming grins.

"Ef it ain't young Massa Ran' hisself! Lan' sakes, sho! My gracious, but ain't yo' growed! Yes, sah! An' Ah bet a purty dis am ol' Massa Billy! Massa Ran' he done tol' us about you from de time he wa'n't knee-high to a goslin'!"

Rand was tall and slender, blue eyed like his Northern mother. His skin was tanned as old leather. He had been cradled in a saddle, with old Bill Raze for his nurse.

Dinah led them into the house, into the dim coolness of the great hall, up the wide stairs and along the corridor to the rambling wing.

Mr. Raze, for the first time in his life, walked over fine carpets, saw the sheen of polished rosewood and mahogany, glanced into tall mirrors, mistaking their gilt-leaf frames for pure gold. It was a matter of pride with him never to show surprise, whether it was an attack of Indians or four aces in the other fellow's hands; but he did crane his neck furtively at all this luxury.

They were shown to adjoining rooms. Mr. Raze opened the door between and leaned there, holding an unlighted pipe.

"Matter, Bill? You sho' look solemn." Rand himself looked and felt pretty solemn.

"Ran', I got somethin' to say, personal."

Mr. Raze cleared his throat, poked a finger into the pipe bowl, rubbed the finger on his blouse and spoke without looking up.

"Many's the time I changed your

di'pers when your ma was busy."

"I reckon."

"An' was the first man that ever histed you inter a saddle."

"What's wrong, Bill?"

"I uster hold the gun f'r you, Ran', when you had to take two fing'rs f'r to pull a trigger!"

"Sho'ly."

"So you ain't li'ble to get a notion I ain't a friend?"

"I'm in fo' a cussin' about something. Go on, Bill."

Mr. Raze again cleared his throat and poked a finger into his pipe, tamping the cold ash. He shifted his feet, scratched his chin, sinking his fingers out of sight in his thick gray beard, then blurted—

"Ran', why the hell do you give more of a damn about Abe Lincoln than Jeff Davis?"

Rand lifted a hand quickly. The gesture was silencing, but also as if he reached out, groping for something to hold to.

"Don't you begin on me, too, about that!" He turned to a window and leaned on one elbow. "States have no right to secede. And what's not right is wrong!"

Mr. Raze stared at him with shrewd, gray-eyed scrutiny from under shaggy brows. Rand said nothing more. The old frontiersman moved back into his own room and took his stand at a window, silent and brooding, much troubled at heart.

GENERAL LANISTER, his sons and daughters, their relatives and friends, returned from church on horseback or in carriages with liveried grooms — a large and festive gathering. Children, glad of release from the carriages and the quiet of the church, went scampering across the lawn. Ladies in muslin and sparkling satin, with beribboned bonnets, had a flower-like Springtime radiance; and the men, descendants of cavaliers, had the bearing of cavaliers even in long black coats and tall beaver hats. Some of the younger men wore uniforms, and were hopeful of soiling them with blood.

Rand and Mr. Raze stood shoulder to shoulder in silence at an upstairs hall window, parting the lace curtains almost furtively. Neither had brought—and Mr. Raze did not own—other than the travel soiled clothes he wore. Rand was glad to have an excuse for avoiding people.

Mr. Raze was chewing tobacco and, with no nearby place to spit, he looked about, hesitated; and then, wanting to say something, he swallowed the juice.

"An' them are your folks!"

"I know. I oughtn't to have come, Bill."

"There's your father gettin' off that hoss. Hmm. Them boys set a saddle easy, but nothin' like a real Texan. Hmm. My eyes ain't what they was thirty year ago; but if that girl that's jus' took hold your father's arm is as purty close by as from here—"

"That's Judith."

"One o' your cousins?"

"Mrs. Lanister's niece. Her folks are dead. My, she's grown since the last time I saw her!"

"And she'll be a grandma by next time, if you go North!"

Mr. Raze grinned sourly within his beard as he saw Rand's face flush. He was a shy, unsociable old fellow, but he watched the people with great interest. Men, women and children talked with animation and laughter as they sauntered about the grounds, while grooms led or drove the horses along the graveled roadway toward the stables. He eyed Rand, who stood peering like one conscious that he was forever barred from companionship with these charming people.

Mr. Raze coughed and again swallowed tobacco juice.

"Lookee here, Ran'. If them was my folks, all hell couldn't make me go North!"

He waited expectantly, but Rand would not answer.

"I've set by, keepin' my mouth shut when you an' your father talked, an' I sort o' didn't like the way he'd get mad at you. But I never before knowed just what a damn fool you're bein'. Them are your folks! An' you are goin' North to fight 'em—" a pause, with spiteful grumbling—"and takin' me along!"

Rand's lean face grew more tense and his eyes narrowed, but he would not speak.

"'Cause you promised your ma?"

No reply.

"But she never knowed these here folks." Mr. Raze waited. Rand did not answer. "Lookee here, I ain't askin' f'r no speech. I don't want f'r to hear about the Union, niggers, 'r State Rights. I ain't got no principles, thank God. I jus' want to know why you're goin' North—to git licked!"

"But I have to go!" Rand tensely spaced the words.

He looked down at his hands and relaxed his fingers. The crisply ironed lace curtains were crumpled like tissue-paper where he had gripped them.

They turned at the sound of running feet on the stairs. A dark eyed girl, laughing with eager welcome, came straight up to them with arms outstretched.

"Rand, Rand, Rand!" she cried joyously. "Dinah just whispered to me that you were here! And this is Mr. Billy, isn't it?"

"Yes, Judith. This is Bill, Old Bill."

The frontiersman blinked, stepped back and started to put out his hand, but wasn't sure whether or not he should. He bowed, or rather bobbed, swallowed and gulped.

"Pleased f'r to meet you, Miss."

"You ought to be, Mr. Billy! I've loved you from the time Rand first told us of you, years and years ago. And my gracious goodness, Rand, how big and grown-up and awkward you are! Why don't you kiss me?"

She stamped her foot, playfully impatient. Judith was the madcap of the family. Her parents having been lost at sea when she was a baby, Judith had been adopted by the Lanisters. In feeling, name and family ties she was a Lanister; and so had never made any coquettish pretence of not loving Rand.

His tanned face reddened like a fresh sunburn and he tried to speak, but his mouth was dry. He backed away, drawing a deep breath; then he reached out toward her, but checked his hands. She uneasily saw that something was wrong and drew away, alarmed at his strangeness. Her glance remained on his face.

"Judith, it wouldn't be fair when—at least until you know—I am going North!"

She stepped back, shrinking, slowly withdrawing farther and farther. Then her head went up, her dark eyes flashed.

"Oh!" She caught her breath. "I s-see I have made a mistake, sir! I—I mistook you for my cousin, Randolph Lanister. Good day to you, sir!"

Judith turned and, with no haste at all, went down the stairs.

Rand leaned forward, watching miserably until the top of her bonnet disappeared. He looked about, embarrassed, but found himself alone. Mr. Raze, with an Indian's noiselessness, had slipped away.

RAND closed the door, sat down in a rocker, leaned forward and looked, without seeing it, at the varicolored circular rug under his feet. Footsteps of a quiet, dignified tread sounded in the hall and stopped before the door. A gentle knock.

"Rand?"

Rand opened the door, facing his uncle. General Lanister put out his hand. The boy hesitated.

"First I've got to tell you I'm—"

"I know, Rand—know all about it."

The general nodded, still holding out his hand. Rand took it, hungrily.

"But why, boy? Just why?"

As Rand did not answer at once, the general closed the door, moved a chair

and sat down. He took cigars from his pocket, offering one.

"You must come down to dinner and meet—"

"Gosh A'mighty, I can't do that!"

"No one knows but your father and I."

"And Judith."

"Judith?"

"I told her. I sho'ly had to. It didn't seem fair fo' her to be glad to see me when she really hates me."

The general blew smoke at the ceiling and followed it with his glance. He spoke kindly, still watching the smoke:

"I am not going to argue or urge you, Rand. But I do wish that you would tell me why, just why. I mean," he added quickly, "that there must be some other feeling or reason besides the promise you gave your mother, who did not really know the South, and judged us by the very worst aspects. Could you, or any one, respect the North if its people and institutions were judged the same way?"

Rand peered at the floor, shaking his head slowly.

"I look at it thisaway:" He spoke with effort, trying to put the words in order and make his thoughts clear. "A man's a coward that won't fight for his country." His eyes lifted as he asked, "Ain't he?"

"Yes, Rand, he is."

"The United States is my country. All of it! Anybody that tries to bust up the United States is fighting my country. Fo' instance, supposing somebody over in Europe was trying to bust up the United States. Wouldn't you fight 'em?"

The general gazed at him soberly.

"I see what you mean, Rand. Go on, boy."

"Well, it's busting the Union that counts. It's not just who is trying to do it. It's as bad fo' South Carolina to do it as 'twould be fo' England or France. And if some of my own folks tried to he'p England do it, I—I would sho'—I would feel awful bad; but I'm fo' the Union!"

"Who taught you to think and feel that way, Rand?"

"Old Hickory, I reckon. He was Southern too, yo' know. But he was ready to fight the South fo' the Union."

"Then you regard me and your father as traitors? Is that the way you feel?"

"No, suh. It's hard to talk and make things clear. But me, I'd be a traitor, if, thinking and feeling as I do, I wouldn't go North and fight. You and dad have to do what you think is right, too. That's being honest. I've got to be honest too, or be a traitor." He was looking straight at his uncle. "Don't you know how it feels to have to do something you sho' don't want to do?"

The general examined his cigar and nodded. He spoke quietly.

"I served under the flag for twenty years—more. God knows I do not want to fight against it now. So I do know how it feels to have to do something you don't want to do."

"It's been hard with dad. But being heah is worse. I wish I hadn't come!"

"But I have no such wish as that, Rand. My boy, God hates a coward. And a coward is one who hesitates to do what he thinks is right. Lanisters must not be cowards."

"I felt awful like one when I saw Judith comin'!"

The general smiled with unhappy approval. He reached into his pocket and drew out a paper, then studied it almost idly as if to make sure it was precisely what he wanted it to be. He held it out.

"Here is a pass, just in case you need one. Everybody is very excited—feel it isn't patriotic if every one who disagrees with them isn't abused. I can't vouch for my children. They are young hotheads. But I can say for myself, Rand, that I shall never cease from an affectionate regard for you!"

Rand swallowed hard, as if choking. He dropped his eyes, arose quickly and struggled to say, "I won't go North! I will stay with the South!" But something held back the words, and he said nothing.

"Now you must come down to dinner, Rand."

"I have only these clothes."

"The boys have plenty of suits and linen."

"But how'll they feel when they know?"

"No need for them to know; at least not today."

"Judith'll tell."

"Judith is more talkative than even most girls, but more trustworthy, too. Her heart will be too heavy, Rand, to tell any one."

The general arose. His hand fell lightly on the boy's head, as if in a blessing.

THE general looked and inquired for Judith, but did not find her. She had gone at once to Rand's father, begging to know why Rand was disloyal, and impetuously suspecting old Mr. Raze's influence.

"No, not old Bill, child!" said the Texan. "It's the other way about. He'd simply follow Rand through hell. But the boy, in spite of everything, isn't a Lanister!"

Judith slipped away, crossed the lawn and withdrew into the chill shadow of a thick jasmine trellis, wanting to be alone. Her dark eyes were dry and bright, but her lips quivered.

Presently she heard her name called, but she shrank deeper into the shadows, guiltily. She sat there a long time, tying knots in her bonnet strings and meditatively untying them without in the least knowing what she was doing.

Her absently staring look fell on Mr. Raze who, with a half furtive slouch and backward glance as if escaping, wandered away from the house. Judith called to him. He stood for an instant, poised as if about to hurry off. She moved into the sunlight, beckoning, and he came.

"Gosh, Little Missus, I'm glad f'r a place to hide. Folks, they look at me like I was an el'phant or somethin'!"

She sat down, moving over, patting the bench seat, inviting him to sit beside her. Mr. Raze sighed and sat down with rheumatic slowness.

"Mr. Billy, why are you a Yankee?"

"I ain't!" said Mr. Raze indignantly.

"Uncle Wallace says you are going with Rand."

Mr. Raze cleared his throat, fingered his beard and peered out into the sunlight.

"Little Missus, I'm goin' with Rand." He nodded. "I'd go anywhere with him. Me an' that boy has sort o' growed into each other. He can do without me, I reckon; but I've got to be where I can reach out an' touch him. Personal, I don't care much f'r Yankees. They're orful liars in a hoss trade, an' otherwise bear watchin'. I don't give a gosh dinged dang about Abe Lincoln 'r the Union. I jus' love that boy."

"And why does he hate us, Mr. Billy?"

"It's queer how much he don't."

"Then why is he going to fight us, Mr. Billy?"

"He ain't. He's goin' off to New York so as to keep clear away from people he maybe knows. It's all queer. His ma was queer. You never seen 'er, did you?"

"She wouldn't come to visit us because we own niggahs!"

"Hmm." Mr. Raze grunted evasively. "She was the only livin' person that could do anything with your Uncle Wallace when he got his dander up an' started to snort. Purty little thing, with a slow smile an' a faroff look in her eyes like she was seein' somethin' that warn't there. Mighty firm and quiet. Brave as a man. An' edycated."

"But Rand oughtn't to hate us just because she did!"

"You'll git som'ere's nearer the truth, Little Missus, if you stop sayin' 'hate'. Long before Abe Lincoln was much heard of, she had her mind made up that war was comin'. An' she had notions about the Union like it was a Bible thing. Rand drunk it in with his milk."

Judith pressed her chilled fingers tightly. She knew the love and pride

Rand had felt in his mother.

"I reckon it's her that's sending him up North."

"She had no right to do it! It wasn't fair. Rand is a grown man now, and he ought to think as much of what his father wants as of anybody else!"

"I feel a little that way too; but you can't argy with Rand, no more 'n with his father. Stubborn folks, them two. An' God A'mighty Hisself would have a tussle f'r to make Rand break a promise not to do what he thinks is right—purtickular one that he made solemn thataway. His mother could do 'most near anything with Rand or with your Uncle Wallace. He ain't got no great shakes of a right f'r to blame Rand. If she warn't dead, I bet he wouldn't 've come to enlist f'r the South. So he orn't blame Rand so much."

Judith cried silently. Mr. Raze awkwardly pretended not to notice. He drew his Bowie knife, fingered the edge, plucked a whisker and pulled it across the knife, cutting the hair an inch at a time. Then he crossed his legs and, with a great air of being about something important, stropped the huge razor-like blade on a boot top.

"I hate him!" Judith sobbed.

"Yes, ma'am, you ort. He's a gosh dinged fool. Unions an' niggers an' State Rights an' all such truck; an' ever'thing else is triv'al compared to—"

His voice trailed off into embarrassed silence as he furtively eyed the lovely girl and nodded affirmatively.

THE general's was a large family—four boys and three girls. All were young, but some were married. The children Rand had played with, not many years before, now held babies of their own for him to admire.

He had put on Valentine Lanister's clothes as more suitable for Sunday and company. He and Valentine were of an age; but Valentine was dark eyed, very handsome, an aristocrat from the cradle up. Now he stood particularly erect, being in the uniform of a captain of State Guards, newly elected by his company.

War talk was in the air. A tall judge very gravely, as if handing down a decision from the bench, explained that the North would not fight. Yankees were all farmers, mechanics, or merchants, descendants of Puritans and the low-born immigrants of Europe. They were not war-like and lacked courage. The South was of the blood of cavaliers—gallant, courageous, unconquerable.

The younger men listened with attentive regret, wanting war, scarcely daring to doubt the wisdom of the judge. But General Lanister, faintly irritated, asked if he had forgotten what happened to the cavalier ancestors once upon a time when they fought the Puritans under a certain Oliver Cromwell? The judge ignored the question.

The general kept Rand near him and pointedly called to Lieutenant Willis Willamotte. Rand shook hands, sensing coldness and dislike in the good looking youth's manner, and wondered. The Lanisters were not a gossiping people. The scandals of New Orleans had never reached Rand either on the plains or when he visited his uncle. He knew nothing of the Willamottes, except that they were a wealthy family and noted for the beauty of their women.

A low, cheery babble filled the dining room as the numerous persons moved in amiable confusion toward the designated chairs at the long table, now loaded with plates and platters of food; and more dishes were being brought by beaming black servants. A gray old negro in livery kept unobtrusively out of the way as he went down the table, pouring wine.

The general's wife, a Creole, still serenely young and beautiful, though a proud grandmother, was escorted to her chair by the tall judge who assumed the air of a lord chamberlain bringing in his queen. In sitting down she glanced about and, her eyes falling on Valentine, she was instantly troubled.

He stood very erect and angrily pale

behind his chair.

The temper of some of her children was trying to Mrs. Lanister. Valentine particularly often seemed to think that it was a manly thing to be easily angered. He was a fine boy, honorable and frank, but almost too much like his Uncle Wallace; and at times he needed what she could never have inflicted upon any child, much less one of her own—a spanking. She could tell that Valentine was now in one of his moods to do something rash or at least sulk morosely and make every one uncomfortable. She tried anxiously to catch the general's eye and signal to him.

All were seated, yet Valentine remained standing. Glances lifted inquiringly and voices paused. General Lanister, not harshly, said—

"Valentine, we are waiting."

Valentine's dark eyes flashed at Rand.

"Sir, I will not sit at the same table with a traitor!"

For a moment the silence was as if the room had become a tomb. The negroes, with platters in hand, paused motionless. Rand's tanned face took on the color of wet ashes.

"Traitor?" said the grave judge.

"Traitor?" said some of the young men to whom Valentine was the pattern of fashion. They pushed at their chairs, ready to leap up.

Valentine leveled his arm.

"He comes here pretending to be one of us; but he has sworn to fight for that black Abolitionist, Lincoln—"

Young men jumped up. The judge, too, rose with haste to avoid the disgrace of being among the last to signify anger at the presence of a traitor.

"That isn't so!" Judith cried from the doorway. She had been bathing her eyes in cool water and had hoped to get to her chair inconspicuously. "Rand told me he was going North. He didn't hide a thing."

Valentine turned on her.

"Then you knew he was a traitor and conceal—"

General Lanister was standing.

"He told *me*, sir!" His face was stern. He looked, in spite of his frock coat, like a commanding officer. "And I, sir, am and shall remain judge of who is worthy to stop in my house and sit at my table!"

Men stood, ill at ease. Women shuddered, holding their breath. The servants gaped in frozen attitudes of astonishment. The statuesque black Dinah fixed her great dark eyes pityingly on Rand.

"Had you come to me quietly," General Lanister added, "as was your duty, both as an officer and as a son, when you found yourself in possession of facts that seemed to need explanation, I would have explained. Instead, you chose to make an ill bred display of tawdry patriotism. Who told you?"

Valentine was hurt as he had never before in his life been hurt by words. His face reddened with shame. His lips came together firmly, then parted.

"I can not tell you, sir!" he said.

"Captain Lanister, sir!" The general spoke to an insubordinate officer, and with a sternness that only insubordinate officers had ever heard from him before. "I have asked you a question."

"And I, sir, will not answer!"

"Go to your room, sir. You are under arrest!"

Murmurs of amazement broke out. Few of those present had more than the vaguest notions about military discipline. This seemed cruelly like sending an unruly child from the table; but Valentine was a man, the favorite of the countryside. Besides, every one did look upon Rand as a traitor.

Valentine hesitated, bewildered. Then he turned on his heel and walked rigidly from the room, his eyes fixed in a glazed look straight before him.

The younger men did not know what to do, but glared at Rand; then, led by one proud boy who would have followed Valentine anywhere, they stalked out with heads up.

"I shouldn't have come heah at all!" said Rand. "I'll go, right now."

He faced his father and said in a voice that tried to sound dignified, friendly, but which nevertheless was trembling and almost a youthful falsetto:

"Goodby, dad. I—"

"No," said his father, throwing up his head and refusing to shake hands. "It was I who told Valentine of your desertion of the South."

Mrs. Lanister pressed a jeweled hand to her eyes and began to sob. Women hastened to put their arms about her, glaring at Rand as if only he were to blame.

MR. RAZE, gray and passive, untroubled, incurious, had come out of hiding and stood beside Rand and the general at the foot of the veranda steps while the horses were being saddled and brought from the stable.

From somewhere near the house came the smell of burning wool and cloth. Valentine's young friends had at once taken his clothes from the room as soon as Rand had changed, and ordered a negro to burn them at a spot where the smell would be noticeable.

Noah came on shambling feet, leading the horses; but before he reached the veranda he paused with head cocked, listening. The throb of hoofbeats was heard in the distance, becoming louder and louder.

Some one rode furiously.

A horseman, bareheaded, came at a breakneck gallop out of the shaded roadway. As he caught sight of the people standing before the house he waved something aloft and bawled vaguely, jerking at the reins of the horse. The horse's hoofs skittered through the gravel.

The man, hoarse, breathless and grinning, leaning from the saddle, handed the general a large envelop; then he straightened in the saddle, flung up his head and yelled:

"Wah's begun! Sumter's fallen! Yee-i-ee-i—ee-oh! Wah has come at last, thank God!"

CHAPTER III

FAREWELL TO THE SOUTH

NEW ORLEANS, the languid and charming, was tumultuously gay; joyous as if after a victory, instead of at the beginning of the war.

The only death that occurred at Fort Sumter was when the garrison, after surrender, fired a salute to the flag that was being lowered. A gun exploded; one man was killed and three were wounded.

Rand and Mr. Raze rode at a walk through the noisy streets.

Women, of the kind who seldom stirred abroad until twilight, now patriotically paraded in carriages or on foot, and their presence was cheered by men, young and old. Men of the poor white caste, gaunt and shabby, reeled drunkenly, bawling—

"'Ray fo' Jeff Davis!" And gentlemen cheered.

Groups of foreigners—New Orleans was a cosmopolitan city—were conspicuous and jubilant too. They put aside any pretence of neutrality. Strutting and swaggering, they soon wore the bizarre uniform of home guards, and made a great display of drills and parades, promising to defend the city if the enemy came.

Rand eventually learned that a Gypsy's curse would have turned back the Southern-born Farragut quite as well as anything the home guards did, or tried to do.

He and Mr. Raze made their way to a livery stable. Rand squatted on his heels in the gathering darkness outside the wide doorway, indifferent and inattentive. The liveryman was drunk and patriotic. Mr. Raze offered the horses for sale. Horses, he said, were going to be needed so Southern soldiers could overtake and get within shooting distance of Yankees. Mr. Raze had gravity, a steady look, a slow tone, the dignity of years, and no conscience at all in a horse trade.

Rand, forgetful of food, led the way to a lodging house. Mr. Raze, supperless, removed boots and blouse. He took the far side of the bed, next to the wall, pretending to sleep; but all through the night he watched Rand, who sat nearly motionless by an open window.

In the morning light the boy looked worn and thin, fagged out. He did not say anything of what he had been thinking except—

"We got to find a boat today, Bill."

After breakfast they went to the levee, Mr. Raze with his long rifle under his arm. Rand openly inquired for passage on a Northern-bound boat and was stared at queerly. A sailor or two mentioned Cuba, significantly; but had they said China it would have been much the same to Rand.

Suddenly up came a big dark man with angry eyes, a club in his hand, oaths in his mouth and ugly rascals at his heels.

These were the patriotic thugs—violent spy hunters—quick to beat and even hang strangers. They were to terrorize New Orleans after fighting men took the field, leaving the city to youngsters, graybeards and home guards. They told one another that each of them could whip five Yankees, but took especial care never to try.

When the brilliant and unscrupulous General Butler came to rule New Orleans, the thugs suddenly discovered themselves as Union sympathizers who had shown their loyalty to the Union by refusing to enlist in Rebel armies. Butler made them swear the oath of allegiance—not because he for a moment believed they would keep the oath, but so he could hang them if they didn't.

The big, ugly man with the swinging club cursed Rand for a traitor who was trying to sneak North, and swore to drag him straight to a recruiting officer. Others pressed close, echoing the leader's oaths.

Mr. Raze moved near Rand's side and put the gun butt on the ground near one foot, holding the barrel in the bend of his left arm. He lifted his blouse, drew the Bowie and, under the pretence of whittling at a thumbnail, calmly stared at the bully's dark face. It was an enormous knife, silver-bright; and Mr. Raze's stooped, thick shoulders had the muscular massiveness of a bull's neck.

"Put that knife away!" said Rand. "This is not Texas!"

"I reckon a man with his guts out 'll die here quick as there. Anyhow, I'm cur'us."

The big, dark man swayed back and moved as if trying to put his club out of sight. The club seemed a trivial weapon while that knife was within arm's reach of his belly.

Rand did not know that these men were merely waterfront hoodlums. He thought they must have some delegated authority, even if violently ready to misuse it.

"I have a pass from General Lanister."

"This here is my pass!" said Mr. Raze, turning the Bowie and letting it glint in the sun.

The leader of the hoodlums could not read. Not one in twenty among the lower class of whites in the South could. But he leaned forward, scrutinizing the writing Rand offered, making a pretence of schooling. Rather a crowd had gathered.

"Boys," the leader announced, "these he'h ahr good Suthnuhs! Yo' kin tell by his voice—" meaning Rand—"he's Suth'un. It shows they is aw right," he went on, apparently convincing himself as he talked, "ohr they wouldn't be askin' right out open fo' a boat No'th. Yanks would be sneakin' about it.

"All boats," he explained confidentially to Rand, "fo' the No'th ahr bein' seized. Yo' git boahd one as is goin' to Cuba. Thot'll take yo' whah yo' wanta git to!"

The next morning Mr. Raze sat up in his bunk. With sad eyes he surveyed the coffee and pea soup Rand had brought, then languidly moved a hand.

"Take it away, son. I done a lot o' things in my life I reckon I orn't, but

the wust ever was to get on this damn boat. In all my life I've never wanted to die. But I do now."

Mr. Raze lay back wearily and turned his face to the ship's side, listening in disgust to the slap of the water.

IN NEW YORK they found as much excitement as in New Orleans—as much hysterical and vainglorious boasting.

The President had called for 75,000 ninety-day volunteers. Newspapers scoffed at the need of so many men. The New York *Times* said the war would be over in thirty days. The New York *Tribune* foretold that Jeff Davis would be "hanged from the battlements of Washington by July 4th." The Philadelphia *Press* told its readers that "the Rebels, a mere handful of ragamuffins, will fly like chaff before the wind at our approach."

In the West boastfulness was not laggard. The Chicago *Tribune* wrote, "Illinois can whip the South by herself", and promised to do so within two or three months.

Militia officers, with strutting offhandedness, urged boys to go on the war-picnic, saying Southerners wouldn't fight.

"Just charge them; they'll run!"

One old gray head lifted itself above the hullabaloo: General Winfield Scott, Commander-in-Chief of the Union Army, known as Old Fuss-and-Feathers, an elephantine man, pompous, aged. In fifty years of campaigning he had never been defeated. General Scott refused to consider ninety-day men as worthy of war; and though he had conquered Mexico with far fewer than seventy-five thousand, he knew that number was wholly inadequate now—possibly because it was mostly with Southern volunteers that he had won the Mexican War. Advised by Scott, Lincoln, less than three weeks later, called for three hundred thousand men to serve for three years. Before the war ended he was to call forth two million seven hundred thousand men.

Rand and Mr. Raze found enormous banners across the streets of New York, soliciting men to enlist in this regiment or that; and on corners men, themselves of military age, urged other men to go and fight.

"Jus' let me see your 'listment paper," the venerable Mr. Raze shrewdly demanded of a street corner militant.

"Unfortunately, my good man," the fellow said unabashed, "I am the sole support of my invalid mother."

"Poor woman," said Mr. Raze.

Women, lovely enough to half drunken eyes, coaxed men before the Cherry Street Naval Recruiting Office and led them indoors. Mr. Raze would have shied from radiant saints themselves had they tried to entice him into service at sea, at least so soon after his first voyage.

Both North and South, especially the North, were fascinated by the Zouaves. During the Crimean War the French Zouaves had distinguished themselves with conspicuous gallantry. At the beginning of the Civil War the Zouave regiments became a fad. The bizarre uniform was equally attractive to youths in homespun and in broadcloth; and the acrobatic drill seemed the proper thing for bayoneting enemies, who were about to run away.

"Wouldn't you look nice," said Mr. Raze, "in them long red pants, like big drawers, an' that upside-down spittoon cap with a gosh dinged tassel!"

The famous Billy Wilson Zouaves, recruited from the Tenderloin—crime decreased by one half in the city when the Wilson Zouaves left New York—marched in and out of Broadway saloons, kneeling on barroom floors and swearing to cut off the head of every Rebel they met.

"They'll take mighty precautious care not to meet many," Mr. Raze suggested; and guessed right. In battle they were cowards and deserted like fleas from a singed pup.

Rand wanted to enlist, but was reluc-

tant to join the men he saw flocking about the street corner booths. He was used to the companionship of men hardened by work and danger. These seemed to be mere boys with inky fingers, as if they had just laid down copybooks or merchants' ledgers. They were store clerks who never in their lives had handled a gun or slept in starlight; or awkward plowboys, earth stained, clumsy of foot and hand; or city men, pale, eager, weak. Under the terrible hammering of the South these same weak, awkward recruits were to become soldiers, as stubbornly heroic as any who ever faced an enemy.

Both Mr. Raze and Rand disliked especially the officers they saw. Most of these were elected by popular vote of the regiment and seldom had a reassuring manner. War was to make them new men, or replace them.

Nearly every time Rand talked with one, the officer, seeing the young Texan was reluctant to enlist, would suspiciously question his accent and grow insulting.

There was, however, another aspect to the North which Rand sensed, but Mr. Raze did not. This was an almost religious fervor regarding the rightness of the war, the preservation of the Union, the sacredness of the flag. It confirmed Rand in the feeling that his mother's urgency had been prophetic. His emotions were stirred loyally, but his affection for the South and the people he knew there did not in any way wither.

To Mr. Raze the flag was just some colored cloth fastened to a stick. Looked pretty in the breeze; but why yell and weep and toss your hat when it went by?

To Rand it was the sacred symbol of his mother's prayerful teaching. He choked, and was a little ashamed of his womanish emotion, when the flag went by, fluttering like a silken-winged thing. It had inspired the tramp of men, the stormy rattle of drums and shriek of fifes. The stars of the seceded States were still in the blue of the Union emblem; and men ennobled by devotion were going forth to fight under that emblem and die that the stars might never be blotted from the flag.

But Rand was embarrassed by feeling that Northern people were somehow like foreigners, almost un-American in their tone and the way they talked; and they were not as he had expected from his Northern mother.

Mr. Raze suggested that they go West, into Illinois or Missouri, and get nearer their own kind of people. But Rand wanted to go to Washington. That was where the Army was being assembled. There they could take their choice among the regiments.

CHAPTER IV

SPY FEVER

WASHINGTON was, and still is, a Southern city. The Northerners who dwelt there by right of politics were—and so remained until Lee surrendered—shiveringly timid of massacre, or at least capture. Even Lincoln was brought surreptitiously into the city for his inauguration and was driven to the Capitol behind triple lines of cavalry. Sharpshooters stood guard at the Capitol windows. Bayonets gleamed under the inaugural stand. It was as if a despot were being crowned among an angered citizenry.

Lincoln himself did come very near to being a dictator. It is competently stated that he wielded more arbitrary power than any Anglo-Saxon since the days of Oliver Cromwell. But even if he had the power he did not have the temperament of a dictator, being just, merciful, unambitious, humorous and kindly. Yet, all through the North, men were denied *habeas corpus;* at Washington judges were arbitrarily arrested for issuing the writs, and women imprisoned for criticizing the arrests.

From the beginning to the end of the war there was confusion and corruption.

Commissions were openly bought and sold. Patriots struggled, bribed, lied and stole, determined to get honor and profit out of the Great Cause. Dishonest contractors, who were to send sawdust to the armies in the field and be paid for powder, rubbed elbows with Ericsson and Eads in the Cabinet members' anterooms. Enlisted men, officers, generals, politicians and statesmen furtively traded with the South, speculating in cotton. One out of seven of all the soldiers who enlisted deserted. As much as eight hundred dollars in bonuses and rewards were offered privates to enlist.

Some Governors were so jealous of their States' fame that they would not allow their recruits to be used to replace shattered veteran regiments, but required that they go as a unit, raw and untrained, into battle under State flags and be massacred.

It seemed as if some sort of curse upon the Union made even the most competent blunder somehow, as when Grant at Vicksburg captured thirty thousand men and at once paroled them; and they, with patriotic dishonesty, at once rejoined Rebel armies. Generals and statesmen thought of deposing Lincoln and setting up a dictatorship. A strong movement was started in the Northwestern States themselves to secede from the Union because it seemed that the war was a failure and the South ought to be allowed to withdraw.

The North outnumbered the South three to one in fighting men and wealth, yet in four years routed and destroyed only one Southern army.

At the beginning of the war Washington was utterly demoralized. There were thirty-seven hundred saloons and liquor booths, some consisting merely of a jug and tin cup on a board between two kegs at street corners and on vacant lots where soldiers became dead drunk and lay about like corpses. Once, with a battle pending, when the order came to move the wagon train forward, not more than five Government teamsters were sober enough to obey.

Gambling houses ran openly; paymasters and Congressmen were patrons. Women swarmed into city and camps, living openly with generals. The city was flooded with obscene books and pictures. A mass of this pornography was, at Lincoln's request, burned on a bonfire before the White House.

History, shamed and patriotic, has pretty well kept her mouth shut about the debauchery and dishonesty in city and camps of Civil War Washington where, especially at the beginning of the war, little men had great power. The worst and most unscrupulous of these during their brief authority were the military police who were, or pretended to be, terrified by the numbers of the Southern sympathizers and the audacity of spies.

RAND and Mr. Raze went to Washington with a trainload of recruits. They were jubilant youngsters who joshed the gray, shaggy Mr. Raze.

"Dad, you're too old to fight. Can't run fast enough for to catch Rebs!"

Mr. Raze grunted and replied—

"After you've cotched up with a few, I bet you don't run so gosh dinged fast neither!"

At Washington Rand and Mr. Raze were helplessly caught in the city's surging swirl. They knew no one—did not know in what direction to go even for lodging.

The sidewalks were crowded. Men tramped in the gutters. The dusty streets were filled with horsemen, carriages, wagons and marching soldiers.

At a street corner Rand asked a question of a red cheeked boy in uniform. The question was overheard by a man with a pale face, a thin black mustache and restless eyes. He looked rather like a swell, with a gold chain dangling on his checkered vest and a tall silk hat, not new. He at once introduced himself to Rand as Dick Geold, talked fluently, flourishing jeweled fingers, and begged to be of service.

"Just come along with me to a friend —an officer. Tell you ever'thing you want to know. Be delighted to see you, you bet, if I bring you."

"I'm sho' obliged," said Rand, glad of the friendliness in this strange, confusing city.

But for a moment Mr. Geold did not appear entirely at ease when he saw that the shaggy old frontiersman was Rand's friend, and coming along too. Mr. Geold asked a few questions, found Mr. Raze was also a stranger, and said he guessed it would be all right.

They set off, squirming through the jostling crowd. Mr. Raze followed with the long rifle on his shoulder. People looked at him curiously, many smilingly.

The affable Mr. Geold led the way to a brick building, up dirty, narrow stairs splattered with tobacco juice to a hall where soldiers loitered with sidearms at belts. They looked queerly at Geold's companions and smirked furtively. One opened a door into a dim room nearly bare of furniture. Two other soldiers with sidearms stood by the door. One said hello, with no liking, to Mr. Geold, who gestured with a superior air, not replying.

A few men and two or three women, not at all shabbily dressed, sat forlornly on benches and stools as if waiting in dread for they knew not what.

"I smell Injuns!" Mr. Raze grumbled.

"Wait here till I speak to the major," said Mr. Geold, grinning.

He hurried across the room and knocked at a door. It opened. The angered voice of an unseen man was heard above a woman's tearful protest.

A frowning face peered through the open door, recognized Geold, said, "The major's busy," but grudgingly admitted him.

Rand, now also distrustful of the affable Mr. Geold, looked at Mr. Raze. There was a bad smell to this place, a sort of sneering furtiveness among the soldiers, a mean lack of gallantry about having women sit forlornly on wooden benches. The windows grimly kept out the sun. Whitewashed walls were placarded with military notices.

"Where are we?" Rand asked.

The soldier, amused, said—

"Ye'll damn soon be larnt!"

"We'd better come back sometime when the major he ain't so busy," Mr. Raze remarked mildly, turning toward the door.

The two soldiers barred the way. One half laughed.

"Jes' don't be in no hurry, Gran'pap. Your time'll come. Have some patience!"

Mr. Raze grunted, not at all ruffled. He peered from under bristly brows and inquired with companionable guile—

"Who's that Geold feller?"

"Good friend o' the major's!" the soldier said, not favorably.

Geold appeared at the doorway, beaming, and waggled a hand.

"Come right along in, Lanister."

Mr. Raze started to follow, but a soldier caught his arm.

"Not you, yit!"

Mr. Raze stopped without protest, calmly bit into a plug of tobacco and watched Rand disappear behind the closing door.

RAND stood in front of a squat man with a lumpish red face who leaned forward with one elbow on a deal table and the other hooked over the back of his chair. He wore a sword and an officer's frock coat; both coat and shirt collar were unbuttoned. Cigar butts were scattered about the floor at his feet.

This was Major Clarky. He had bulging, wrathful eyes and always seemed to be trying to look angry. Usually he was. Rumor said that he had been a bartender before becoming a police detective in New York. Something better than rumor made it known that a United States Senator, of whom scandalous stories were told, had used his authority to get Clarky commissioned and detailed to the military police at Washington.

Three or four soldiers were in the room. One wore a sergeant's stripes; one in shirtsleeves sat on a stool by a corner of the table with a pad before him and a pencil in hand.

Geold bent forward, talking glibly in a low voice near the major's ear while the major glowered at Rand.

"Name? Your real name!" Major Clarky shouted.

"Randolph Lanister."

"Lanister, heh? Didn't have to look in your hat, did you? Hell of a name. Lanister?" He pronounced it as if trying the name on his tongue, like something he could taste. "Born?"

"Texas."

"Texas, heh? Rebel State, heh? Mess o' damn traitors! Age?"

"Twenty."

Clarky snorted.

"Liar! Older 'n that, ain't you?"

"I'd be mighty obliged fo' to know why I'm being questioned like this?"

"Fo' to know, heh?" The major mimicked his accent. "Because I feel like it!" He smote the table with a fist and lurched forward, jiggling the clerk's pad.

Mr. Geold's glib voice rose gleefully.

"I could tell right off, Major, that he was a Reb; and when I pretended to be a Reb too, he up and told me he was here to learn what he could about our Army."

Rand settled back on his heels as if struck. The utter falsity of the words dumbfounded him. That a man could lie so, and without any cause at all, was bewildering. And Geold was gleeful about it.

Rand started for Geold.

"You are a damned liah!"

Geold scrambled behind the major's chair, and the major jumped up barking:

"Halt! Halt! Halt!" The sergeant reached out at Rand, checking him.

Mr. Geold squawked plaintively—

"Of course he'd call me a liar!"

Major Clarky cursed.

"Know who I am? Know where you are? You stand still and answer when I speak! Show more respect in my presence. Take off your hat."

He shook his fist. Rand made no move. The major jerked off his hat, glanced at it, eyeing the curiously knotted band as if with suspicion, then flung it to the floor.

"If you're not a damned Reb spy, then what the devil are you doing here in Washington?"

"I come to enlist."

"*Sir* to me!"

Rand did not answer.

"Do you hear? Say *sir* to me!"

"I'll see you in hell first!"

"Oh, you will, will you? In hell, heh?" Major Clarky grinned one-sidedly. Then, moved by a precautionary thought, he asked, "See here. Anybody in Washington know you — vouch for you? Any friends?"

Rand, unwisely honest, defiantly said—

"No!"

Clarky sneered.

"Thought not!" Loudly and rapidly he demanded, "When did you come North? How? When? Who sent you? Why don't you answer? Why don't you answer?"

"Give me a chance, and I will. I come by boat, about ten days ago, to New York."

"To enlist, heh? Then why the hell haven't you enlisted! Why? Why? Don't you hear me askin' you why? Takes twenty minutes to enlist. Ten days of spyin' and snoopin'. Why don't you answer me? Can't lie quick as you'd like, heh? No, damn you! Search him!"

The command was given with much the same tone and flourish as if ordering men to charge a battery.

The sergeant and a soldier moved with unhurried matter-of-factness to a familiar and not wholly agreeable duty. They perfunctorily emptied Rand's pockets, finding nothing that caught the major's malicious eyes. Then they removed the money belt Rand wore next to his body, taking out some three hundred dollars in gold; and this brightened the major's and Mr. Geold's faces. But when they saw the pass, cherished as a

keepsake, signed by General Randolph Lanister, C.S.A, permitting Rand to pass any lines and all sentries within the military command at New Orleans, Major Clarky whooped and the excited Geold familiarly slapped the major's shoulder and was unrebuked.

Geold swaggered, chattering self-praise. Clarky waved the pass before Rand's nose and shouted—

"You'll be shot by sundown!"

"Now you see I was right, I was right!" Geold chanted hysterically.

"Came to enlist, heh? Ha! Ha! Ha! And your name's Lanister, too, heh? You that old Rebel polecat's son?"

Rand was on fire with anger, but nevertheless did try to explain.

The major interrupted every statement, twisted every admission.

"You're a damned spy! Hear me? Spy, I tell you!"

Had he captured Jeff Davis himself—Davis was one day to be captured, disguised as a woman—Clarky could scarcely have acted more pleased.

Suspects were daily examined and many arrested; the jails were filled. Washington was, and was known to be, harboring spies who learned every secret. But it was beginning to seem almost impossible to get spies executed. But, of course, war had just started; the savage patriots and spy-catchers were still hopeful, and the accused apprehensive that any day now the city would have its Roman holiday. However, so far, a gaunt man with a tragic face, who told funny stories to uncomprehending, pompous persons, who in turn groaned to their friends that he was nothing but a small town bumpkin, used the mighty authority of his office to let the ink dry on pens handed to him when asked to sign his approval of death warrants.

Clarky had the blood-lust of spy-fever. How else could he make the public understand his importance if people were not hanged or shot? But here, indubitably, was a spy! He would this evening talk of the capture at Ridenour's; later at Willard's bar; and retell it all at the Empress where he went nightly to play roulette, drink champagne and try as best he could to win the admiration of a certain beautiful young woman, whose charms were not ignored by Major Clarky's superiors.

For some reason incomprehensible to gentlemen Major Clarky's attentions did not seem objectionable to this lovely French-Canadian actress.

"BRING in that other one!" Major Clarky boomed. He patted Geold's back. "Good boy, Dick! I'll tell General Heckle about you!"

He returned to his chair, glared and posed, ready to frighten the truth out of Mr. Raze.

Mr. Raze came with shuffling, dragging feet and a mild air, the rifle under his arm. He glanced toward Rand and got a look vibrant with warning.

"You let a man come armed into this room!" Major Clarky bounced to his feet, shaking his arm. "Seize that gun!"

Mr. Raze showed an unagitated astonishment, very meekly. His keen gray eyes glanced from Rand to the major, then at the sergeant who reached for the rifle. Mr. Raze gave it over without protest; but when the sergeant, noting the knife's scabbard tip below the buckskin blouse, reached as if to take the Bowie also, Mr. Raze put his hairy hand on the haft and said mildly:

"Don't take this knife, son. I use it f'r trimmin' my corns."

The sergeant did not make an issue of the knife, but stepped back as the major bellowed—

"And who the hell are you?"

"Me? W'y I'm jus' ol' Bill Raze." He spoke softly, as if garrulously, with nothing in the world to hide. He went on with no air of understanding how important his words might sound, "I been guide to Frémont; an' durin' the Mex'can War I was scout f'r Gen'ral Scott. Now that thar's another war, I come to Wash'ton f'r to see the gen'ral."

Mr. Raze took a step aside, pulled

back his beard and spat at a low square box half filled with sawdust. He wiped his beard with the back of his hand, nodded, standing mild and humble, like one full of the truth and ready to speak further if encouraged. The sergeant and privates gazed at him with sudden respect. Mr. Geold's perkiness wilted. The glare left Major Clarky's poppy eyes.

The famous Frémont, once almost President, now hastily homeward bound from England, was already spoken of in the Northern press as a great general. General Scott was Commander of the Army. One little grunt from him, and Major Clarky could be sent to active duty.

Mr. Raze had indeed once been guide to Frémont but, disliking his fantastic egotism, had told him to go to the devil and withdrew, making his way alone through the wilderness, leaving the Pathfinder to take beaten paths. He had also been scout for General Scott—that is, for Scott's army—but never in his life had he seen the general. But such trivialities of explanation were beneath the old frontiersman's dignity. He stood calm and patient, very much as if not interested.

Major Clarky's tone was questioning, not severe, as he asked—

"What on earth are you doing here in Washington with him?" He pointed at Rand.

"I come to 'list. Folks tell me I'm too old. I reckon Gen'ral Scott won't think so, mebbe." He peered as if sighting over a gun barrel at Major Clarky. "The ol' gen'ral and me are about of an age."

"But what are you doing in the company of this fellow? He's a spy—" the major flourished the paper—"with a pass from that Rebel general, Lanister of Louisiana."

"Him? He is? I'll declare! An' he seemed a nice young feller, too! He was on the boat I took at New Orleans. We been together since. A spy? Waal, waal!"

"His name, too, is Lanister. Do you think he is that Reb general's son?" Clarky glared at Rand. "He says old Lanister is his uncle, but I bet—"

"Thot's what he told me, too. What you goin' do with him?" Mr. Raze eyed Rand with great curiosity.

"Put him in jail and have him shot," the major thundered.

"Sarves 'em right, spies," Mr. Raze agreed, spitting again. "'Bout how soon, hmm?"

Major Clarky threw up his hands in an irate gesture of frustration.

"No telling!" He cursed. "We catch spy after spy, and the War Department keeps them in prison and feeds them—takes food from our own brave boys to fatten them! Tell me," the major urged, "have you ever heard him speak disloyally?"

Mr. Raze meditated, scratching deep within his beard, and his eyes for a moment looked steadily at Geold's face.

"No. No, can't say as how I have. Fact is, I heard 'im say that agin all fam'ly feelin' he was goin' f'r to enlist in the Union Army."

"Oh, but he'd have to talk that way to a loyal old patriot like you!" Major Clarky waved a hand as if exposing all the tricks of the disloyal.

Mr. Raze grunted. Rand stood with his head up in the way characteristic of his father at moments of stubborn daring. Nothing could budge a Lanister when he got his head up with that bedamned-to-you look.

"Very sor'ful," said Mr. Raze with a shake of his head.

"You may go now." The major came near, putting out his hand. It was an honor to shake the hand of one who had been guide to Frémont and scout for Scott. "It's good loyal men like you that the country needs in her hour of trial!"

"Trial," Mr. Raze repeated, nodding.

"And when you see General Scott, you might mention—ha-ha—that I caught the spy who had taken even you in."

Mr. Raze grunted, pulled at his beard, spat afar. Again for a moment his gray eyes peered steadily at Geold, who

moved uneasily and looked aside.

"You can assure General Scott," Major Clarky's tongue fairly licked the name, lovingly, "of the loyalty and alertness of my department!"

"Thankee."

Mr. Raze took the rifle the sergeant offered and looked at it much as a cat does at a kitten that has been returned. He stroked the black walnut stock with the palm of his hand and put the rifle muzzle-down under his arm; then he shuffled from the room, pausing at the door with a backward look.

RAND was put into the old Capitol Prison — locked up with negroes, drunken soldiers, Southern sympathizers, all of whom chewed tobacco. Some of them loudly tormented the guards with prophecies that Confederate armies would soon be in Washington and release the prisoners so they could join in the pillage of the city.

The negroes sang and joked. Often they did not know why they were in jail and did not care. Some were runaway slaves, held for return to Southern slave-catchers.

It was to be a long time before the North dared confiscate the property of its enemies. However, the cross-eyed Ben Butler, brilliant militiaman, untroubled by scruples, eventually to rank next to Grant for a time in the command of the Army, laid down a negro war policy that delighted the North with the word "contraband". But nobody dared whisper officially that slaves were ever to be free. General Hunter in Florida and General Frémont in Missouri were rebuked by Lincoln for emancipation proclamations long before the President ventured to make public his own.

At the beginning of the war the North tried to behave conciliatingly. McDowell's orders, during the first invasion of Virginia, forbade Union soldiers to touch a Confederate chicken or ear of corn. The change in attitude is illustrated by the reply of one of Sherman's soldiers to an angered farmer's wife whose barnyard he had looted—

"Madam, the rebellion must be put down if it takes the last chicken in Mississippi!"

CHAPTER V

INTRODUCING LAURA

RAND, glum and silent, leaned in a dark corner, confused by the noise of the prisoners and by the injustice that had put him here. He thought of his uncle's chivalry, making a comparison; he did not know, of course, that the Confederate government had published the promise to send all who confessed themselves Union sympathizers out of the country—with no remote intention of keeping the promise, but merely to get Union sympathizers to declare themselves. Suspected spies and deserters were shot and hanged in the South far more readily than under the "tyrant", Lincoln.

Rand had been in the bull-pen only about two hours when the prisoners took up his name.

"Lan'ster — Lan'ster? Who's Lan'ster?"

"One o' Heckle's boot-shiners wants you, Lanister."

"Pay 'im five dollahs ohr yo'll be took out an' shot!"

"What's the matteh?" Rand asked.

"You Lanister? Then git over to the gate. Yo' ah wanted.

Rand went to the iron lattice gate where a black-bearded captain, gilded with finery, pressed his face to the bars and peered hard at him with eyes as cold and lusterless as shoe buttons.

"You are Lanister?"

Rand nodded.

"Not the one I hoped for!" The officer's voice had a smooth, slithering tone. Cat-like, he showed a gleam of very white teeth, in his black-bearded face. "Get out here where I can have a look at you. Open the door."

"Yes'r," said the big, sluggish turnkey.

The heavy door was pulled open. Prisoners, idle and curious, pressed close to see and overhear. Rand stepped out into the dim corridor. The captain came near, caught Rand by the shoulder and pushed him, bringing his features more fully into the light.

"I hoped you were that damned Val Lanister! Are you one of his brothers?"

"No."

"I think you're lying! You'd say no damn quick to me! You know who I am?"

"I don't."

"William Harrison Terris!" The officer said it in a way that showed he expected Rand to give a start.

Rand shook his head.

"Neveh heard of you."

"Then, by heaven, you are no Lanister, or you're lying! All your damn family know it's best not to meet *me!* Who are you, then? What are you doing with a pass signed by General Lanister? I am General Heckle's aide!"

"Yo' his boot-licker!" an unidentified voice shouted from among the prisoners.

Captain Terris glowered at the faces peering through the bars; but he had learned better than to threaten, or banter with, the defiant Southerners.

"I don't know nothing about you," said Rand.

"Oh, you don't, eh? You'll damn soon learn. You told Major Clarky you were Val Lanister's cousin. I think you're his brother! But if you are even a cousin, you'd better tear up your shirt, make a rope and hang yourself! Hear me? Lock him up!"

"Yes'r," said the sluggish turnkey.

The officer strode off with clicking heels and jangling sword. The boos of the prisoners followed him.

"Is evehbody up North heah crazy?" Rand asked blankly of the turnkey.

"If they git some gold braid on 'em they shore ac' like it," the turnkey mumbled critically.

Prisoners tried to talk with Rand and ask questions, seeming to admire him because of Captain Terris's dislike; but he was uncommunicative. Presently when others left him alone, an elderly, white haired gentleman, grave and erect, came near and asked in a low voice—

"Boy, are yo' really a Lanister?"

"Yes."

"Related to the New Ohleans Lanisters?"

"The general is my uncle."

"Then, suh, yo' come of a mighty fine family. Yo' know, don't you, suh, why that Terris ruffled his feathers like a mad turkey gobbler at yo'?"

"No, I don't."

"Are yo' sho'?"

"Yes, I'm sho'!"

"Didn't yo' neveh heah how yo' cousin slapped the face o' this black Yankee lawyah down in New Ohleans a long time back?"

"Neveh. What about?"

"Suh, they is no tellin' what partic'lah brand o' contemptible villainy an Abolitionist scoundrel may have indulged in to draw the angeh of a gentleman like yo' cousin; but, suh, such things happen only oveh cyards and ladies. And as no gentleman would demean hisself by playing cyards with a pusillanimous blackguard, the fair name of some lady must have been—"

The grave and gracious gentleman talked at length, but never became more specific.

THE following afternoon a tall handsome soldier came to the gate, and the sluggish turnkey called—

"Lan'ster!"

Rand stirred from a trance-like brooding, unsure that his imagination had not tricked him. He stepped over two negroes playing at thumbs, carefully avoided the slumped body of the friendly old gentleman who lay in uneasy sleep, pushed past a drunken, ribald soldier and reached the gate.

"Lanister?" asked the tall handsome orderly, peering through.

"Yes."

"What the hell have you done to be

so lucky!" the soldier demanded good-naturedly.

"Lucky? I've had no luck but of a kind you are welcome to!"

"You're a liar!" said the orderly, grinning in friendliness. "I'd swap boots with you right now, for at least a half hour." He studied Rand with great interest.

The turnkey opened the door.

"Come along," said the orderly.

An awkward yokel of a soldier with a fixed bayonet followed Rand. They went through corridors, up a stairway into a hall, and stopped before a door.

"Wait," said the orderly, and entered. Almost at once he reappeared and held the door open. "Come in, Lanister."

The guard remained outside, leaning on his grounded, bayonet-tipped musket as if on a post.

The orderly wheeled, saluting.

"The prisoner, Lanister, sir!"

"I know that as well as you do. Got eyes, haven't I? Get out!"

Major Clarky, with his hat on, was standing near the center of the room with his hands behind him, frowning at Rand. Beside him stood Captain Terris, very much in the self-conscious attitude of having his picture taken. His hat was off, showing his wavy black hair. His beard was brushed and looked as if the ends had been curled. Both hands rested on his sword hilt. There was much that was self-confident and sly about Terris; and his black, shoebutton eyes were cruel.

Rand, feeling utterly luckless, looked from one to the other and settled back on his heels with head up. Clarky gestured impatiently at the orderly, repeating—

"Go on, get out!"

"Very good, sir!" The handsome orderly saluted and stared at the other side of the room as he withdrew.

Rand then noticed a heavily veiled woman, motionless beside a window. She was watching him. Her attitude was so intent that Rand felt she must dislike him.

"Know him— Ever see him before?" Terris asked with a smug intimacy that made Rand distrust her.

The woman shook her head, continued to look at him a moment longer, then lifted her veil, fastening it up out of the way on her hat. She was dark, young, and of startling beauty. Her eyes searched Rand's face as if she had not quite told the truth in denying that she knew him. He was uneasy, and in a way a little fascinated by the feeling that something that had to do with his fate was going on in her thoughts; but he could not imagine what or why. The lift of her head and straightness of her shoulders indicated that she had pride, yet he could not help thinking that she was a little sad. A shadow seemed to lie under her beauty as if cast there by hidden tragedy.

"Well, you want to talk to him or not?" Major Clarky did not mean to sound rude; he fidgeted helpfully and glanced at the sleek Terris as if jealously studying manners and the secret of winning the lady's favor.

"Some things are learned by seeing," she replied coolly and drew the long gloves through her fingers as she walked to a chair.

"Then you don't know 'im at all?" asked Clarky.

"Of course she doesn't know him!" said Terris, showing his teeth. He added with satisfaction, "She hates the Lanisters as much as I do. Don't you, Laura?"

The girl gave Terris a look, quick as a flash and enigmatically direct; then she sat down, saying—

"I never heard of a blue eyed Lanister!"

"Or of one that wasn't white livered!" Terris added, grinning. He nodded at Rand affirmingly.

"You are a damned liah!" Rand blurted.

Terris sneered loftily, but Clarky broke into the hubbub of stormy words and gesticulation.

"You're talking to an officer—"

"Came North to enlist, eh? See how it angers him to have Rebels called cowards!" said Terris, sleekly unruffled.

"Damned insolence, you blasted spy!" Clarky waved a fist.

"No doubt of it, Major. He *is* a spy!" Terris continued to grin, enjoying the trickster's twist he had given Rand's anger.

"And if I didn't think he'd be shot in a week, or less, I'd call the guard now and have him bayoneted!"

The girl looked at Rand and seemed to study the effect of Clarky's blustering and Terris's sneers, as if his attitude at such a time was important. She asked—friendly, insistent, faintly coaxing—

"Just who are you?"

"Rand Lanister."

"Ain't you got no manners? Say *ma'am* to her!" Clarky ordered, and turned toward the girl for a rewarding glance, but she did not notice.

Terris put his hand on the back of her chair, murmuring—

"So proud of the name he wouldn't change it, even in becoming a spy, eh?"

She leaned forward, either to observe Rand more carefully or to be a little farther from Terris's hand.

"Then you are—" The hovering intonation with which she left the words unspoken did not indicate whether she was about to make an inquiry or a statement.

"Wallace Lanister is my father. I was bo'n in Texas—lived there."

HER dark eyes brightened, but she frowned. Perhaps she was displeased, perhaps distrustful. It did not appear to be the sort of reply that she wanted to hear.

"Is he lying?" Terris asked. "I never heard of Texas Lanisters."

"Makes no difference," said Clarky, loudly. "All out of the same nest, I bet. Rebels and spies. He claims to be a Lanister. That's enough for me!"

"Or me," Terris agreed, showing his teeth.

"So you are the son of Wallace Lanister?" the girl asked slowly, as if she scarcely knew what to think.

"I am," said Rand.

"I am a play actress. My name is Laura Lorraine—"

Captain Terris made a slight tittering sound; then he quickly rubbed at his mouth, stroked his beard and gazed upward with affected interest at a corner of the ceiling.

"What's the matter with you?" Clarky demanded, roughly but in friendliness. "Ain't she?"

"Oh, yes, yes, of course. I was just thinking of something funny. Tell you sometime, Major. Go on, Laura. Give the whelp a sketch of your history. Ought to interest him, if he is a Lanister!"

"More even than you think," she replied aloofly. "I have played at New Orleans," she explained to Rand. "Once I was very friendly with your uncle's family. That is why the major and captain asked me to come here—"

"You were eager enough, all right!" said Terris.

"The captain knew but one member of your uncle's family well enough to recognize him. Anybody may call himself a Lanister—"

"Though why anybody would want to is beyond me." Terris yawned affectedly, and with a dainty gesture pretended to conceal the yawn.

"Will you please name some members of the family? I wish to see if you can. With just a word of description." She moved a slim hand, signaling to Rand, urging him to begin.

He hesitated, feeling they were all unfriendly, that whatever he said would be to his disadvantage; but he began:

"Valentine's the oldest boy. Mighty handsome, with a temper—"

A frown, and a tightening of the lips, as when one tries to conceal pain, marked her face. She looked toward the wall. Her gaze lingered there so steadily that Rand also looked. Nothing was

there. Just tan wall paper with faded figures.

Terris eyed her queerly and grinned. He made his scabbard clank as if he liked the sound as he crossed to a window and sat on the ledge, taking a great interest in the street below.

"Go on; go on!" said Clarky. "She's waiting!"

"Well, there's Judith, who is—" Rand stopped, a little confused, not liking to speak of Judith here.

The girl nodded and smiled quickly. The smile was encouraging and seemed friendly.

"—is—well, just Judith. Clarendon's the next to the oldest. He's got three moles on the middle of his back—"

"No doubt," she interrupted, amused. After her cool alertness, it was nice to see that she could be amused. "But I can scarcely admit knowing that."

Clarky laughed.

Terris called—

"What's funny?" and came toward them, sauntering.

"You missed it!" said Clarky.

She arose, turning away, drawing her glove through one hand, and again moved toward a window.

"All through, Laura?" Terris asked.

"Yes," she said, not looking at him.

Terris turned and walked with her to the window, but she did not answer—did not seem even to listen.

"Orderly!" the major called, bellowing.

The tall, handsome orderly entered promptly and faced toward the major, but looked at the girl whose back was turned.

"Take this fellow back."

"Yes, sir. Come along, you!" Somehow the orderly seemed to have lost all his friendliness toward Rand, and the willingness to swap boots.

Rand turned to follow, but the girl faced about and spoke from across the room.

"One moment, please."

She hesitated, as if moodily deciding. Moments passed. She toyed with her gloves, looking steadily at Rand. Then her glance flickered toward the handsome orderly and a glove fell. Terris stooped.

"Thank you," she said, taking it; and, idly striking the air with an end of the glove, she spoke to Clarky. "That is all, Major. I am sure that he *is* a Lanister!"

"Come along, Lanister." The orderly touched his shoulder, somehow with renewed friendliness.

In the hallway the guard fell in step behind, but the orderly walked with Rand.

"Lucky devil, Lanister. They can shoot me any time she'll send—" He glanced behind him at the shuffling guard. "Here!"

He plucked at Rand's arm and pressed a note into his hand.

"I'm General Heckle's orderly. Me and her are friends. Said she couldn't be sure she wanted you to have it till she'd talked with you. When she dropped that glove it meant I was to give it to you. She knows she can trust me! Any woman as pretty as she is can any time. That Terris an' Clarky are a pair of asses! She's French-Canadian, they say. I'm sure going to Canada when this war's over . . ."

Inside the bull-pen Rand lay on a wooden bunk and in the dim light broke the seal, furtively unfolded and read the note. It was unaddressed.

> Of course you will never see this unless you are a Lanister. And if you are, it is very perilous to meet you for, if I permit you to recognize me, your surprise and indignation at finding me with such companions may make you say something rash. May I not say that it does seem a little hopeless to expect discretion from one who is unwise enough to retain the pass of a Confederate general? It is dangerous to try to help you, but be assured that I will try.

There was no signature.

Rand put the paper into his mouth and chewed slowly, masticating it into pulp. He swallowed the pulp.

TO BE CONTINUED

The HUMAN FACTOR

By REECE HAGUE

Author of "The Stranger from Boston"

ALWAYS an event of importance, the arrival of the weekly train at Pelican Portage was awaited this early March afternoon with more than usual interest. Despite an old-fashioned blizzard, with the temperature below zero, the citizens of the Northern outpost had collected in force at the depot on the edge of town.

Among the crowd were Andrew Ross, the aged trader, noted throughout Northern Saskatchewan for his taciturnity, and Jeff Parton, the freighting contractor, who was no less famed for his volubility. They stood a little apart from their fellow townsmen as the belated train drew up to the platform. A handful of passengers alighted from the single day coach.

"That's him!" Jeff ejaculated, grabbing his old crony's arm and pointing a none too clean finger at a strongly built, fresh complexioned young man who had emerged from the carriage and was walking with a limping gait along the platform toward the rear of the train. "I seen his picture in one of them Sunday papers after he won that race at Nome last Winter," Jeff explained. "Looks like he's hurt his leg, though—and a man ain't much good in a dog race unless his underpinnings is in apple pie shape."

"Only got half his right foot," Andrew broke in gruffly. "Got it froze when he was just a kid."

"Well, I never heard nothing about that!" Jeff's tone betokened surprise. "Half a foot froze off, you say? And yet he's reckoned to be the daddy of the Alaskan mushers. Can't be much competition up that way. Slim Walsh'll jest naturally trim the hide offa him with that bunch of my dogs he's drivin'. Slim's legs is powerful, and Slim don't figger standin' on the tailboard of no carriole while the dogs do all the work. Slim'll run pretty nigh fifty miles out of the hundred on race day, and no one-legged guy who has to ride behind his team the whole way'll finish within hours of him."

Andrew Ross merely grunted in response. The freighter, seeing the new arrival surrounded by a group of local men, said in his high pitched voice:

"Well, move along, Andy. They're headin' for the box-car, and I'm sort of hankerin' to get a peek at them Alaskan malamutes I've heerd sech a lot about. They must be pretty fair dogs, at that, to win races haulin' a cripple like this Mushin' Terror, even if the teams they was racin' agin wasn't so hot. Funny callin' a guy with only one foot a Mushin' Terror, ain't it? I guess they don't expect a feller to chase his dogs any in this Alaska country—and the guy who can holler the loudest while he's ridin' his carriole gets himself the biggest reputation.

"I don't care how good his dogs is,

though. No cripple can beat Slim and my dogs. If you're feelin' like a little bet for once in your life, Andy, I'll wager you two to one Slim licks the field next week."

The trader again contented himself with a noncommittal grunt as he and his companion strolled up to the group of which Tim Logan, better known among his Alaskan dog racing fans as the Mushing Terror, was the center.

Though Andy was sparing with his speech, his keen old eyes missed very little.

As the two men approached the box-car, near which Logan and the others were standing, the trader heard Paul Wilson, president of the Dog Racing Association, say to the newcomer:

"Hope your dogs stood the journey O.K, Logan. You've only got a week to get 'em in shape for the big grind. The local teams you'll be up against are a pretty speedy bunch. Anything the association can do to help you, just let us know. Being a stranger up this way, you'll probably want a local man to show you over the course before race day."

"Mighty good of you," the Alaskan musher acknowledged, "but I won't take a chance on putting my dogs over the course before race day. After being cooped up in a ship for several days and a train for nearly a week, exercising only when the stops were long enough to harness up and run around for a bit, they'll be better with just short runs to limber 'em up."

"You're probably wise," Wilson admitted. "Well, here's the brakeman coming along to open up the car. We'll give you a hand getting your dogs out."

"Thanks just the same, but I'd better throw them into the harness myself," the Mushing Terror replied. "Matter of fact, I'm a bit queer about my dogs," he added a shade apologetically. "I'm not keen on any one else's handling them, particularly when they're a bit scary after this long journey. They don't take too kindly to strangers at any time. I traveled in the box-car with 'em a good piece of the way; fed them myself and kept their joints loosened up by rubbing them with alcohol."

From the car Logan fetched a dog sleigh entirely different from anything the men of Pelican Portage had ever seen, also an armful of webbing presumably used as harness.

Jeff Parton eyed the flimsy looking sleigh, with its two narrow runners and long handlebars, disparagingly. He picked it up to heft its weight.

Upon discovering that the sleigh weighed only a few pounds, the freighter turned to the Alaskan and said dogmatically:

"This contraption of yours'll fall to pieces if you hit a stump. Best pick up a good stout carriole before you start traveling through the bush trails in this country."

"It's light, all right; but it's strongly made," Logan said. "Like this harness here—" He indicated the traces which he was about to attach to the sleigh.

Jeff looked at the harness and commented:

"Good strong leather is what you need, young feller. Them things won't stand the gaff. Why, I could pull 'em apart with my bare hands."

The Mushing Terror shook his head.

"They only weigh a pound to a dog," he explained. "They're just as strong as leather and a lot lighter. When I'm racing I figger that every ounce in weight saved counts a whole lot before the course is covered, particularly since I've got to be a passenger most of the way."

"If you got to be stoppin' to mend harness, or your sleigh falls to pieces on you, it ain't so good in a race," the freighter insisted. "This race of ours is through rough country. You'll be wise to get yourself a regular outfit of harness and a real carriole before you start out."

"From what I've seen of the country hereabouts, coming through in the train, it isn't as tough as the territory around Nome," Logan assured the freighter;

his tone was matter-of-fact, not argumentative.

WHEN the Alaskan brought from the box-car nine dogs of indeterminate color and frail appearance — compared with the powerful huskies with which the men of Northern Saskatchewan were familiar—Jeff Parton's opinion that the Mushing Terror was simply a false alarm developed into a full fledged conviction.

As Logan, speaking in a continuous reassuring undertone to the restive animals, adjusted their harness, the freighter drew Andrew Ross aside and said confidently:

"I'll give you five to one Slim licks the pants offa this Alaskan feller, Andy. Them mangy little half-pint coyotes couldn't cover a hundred miles in three days, let alone fourteen hours, like my team done last year. This year they'll better that time—and by the time they're passin' the winnin' post this cripple and them lousy malamutes of his'll be jest about pullin' in to the 25 Mile Camp on the outward trip."

When Logan's dogs were harnessed and the musher had taken his stand on the runners of his sleigh, Paul Wilson remarked:

"I've got a room booked for you at the Northern Lights Hotel, Logan. Just go straight down the road about half a mile and you'll come to it. It's the only three-story building in the town, so you can't miss it. There's a bunch of jack-pine at the back where you can tie your dogs."

"I was figgering on trying to get a room some place quieter than the hotel's liable to be around dog race time," the Alaskan told the association president. "Then again I suppose there'll be a lot of other dogs tied back of the hotel. If any of 'em happen to get loose and start chewing up these malamutes of mine I'll be out of the race. I've come too far not to have a team at least lined up at the starting post."

"You can put up with me."

The tone in which Andrew Ross tendered the invitation was gruff; but after an appraising glance at the aged trader Logan said gratefully—

"That's mighty good of you, Mr.—"

"Ross," Andrew enlightened him. "Go on through the town until you see my name over a store. The back is fenced in, and you can tie your dogs there. I'll be along in a few minutes."

Removing his foot from the sleigh brake—another innovation to the Pelican Portage dog men—the Mushing Terror gave a shrill whistle instead of the customary command to mush and, as their owner stood erect on the runners, the malamutes sped townward.

"They can move, all right," Jeff Parton admitted grudgingly to Andrew Ross as the two men walked along in the wake of the disappearing team. "But they won't stand up in a long, hard race. They ain't got the build. This Logan guy's only been used to short races and point-to-point events where they rest up overnight. He'll find a hundred-mile, non-stop race somethin' mighty different."

The freighter accompanied the trader to his living quarters at the rear of the Ross Trading Store; and on arriving there they found the Alaskan kneeling in the snow in the back yard applying alcohol and massaging a dog's leg joints.

"This is Candle, my lead dog," Logan explained as he looked up and saw the two men watching him. "He's the oldest dog on the team and seemed a bit stiff when we were coming down from the station. Where is the settlement's butcher shop, Mr. Ross? I want to get these pups their supper."

"I'll walk along and show you," the trader offered.

"Mean to say you aim to buy butcher's meat for your dogs?" Jeff Parton asked incredulously. "I got more frozen fish than I need over at my place. Come across, and I'll give you all you want."

"Thanks just the same, but I always

feed them meat," Tim Logan said, not in a superior tone, but nevertheless much to Jeff's annoyance.

"Well, I'll be a—"

Words failing him, the disgusted freighter stalked off to his own quarters, while the Alaskan and the trader visited the local butcher to procure fifteen pounds of good red meat for a team of hungry malamutes.

THE Mushing Terror devoted the days before the race to taking short journeys through the surrounding country with his dog team, apparently oblivious of the curiosity which his novel method of harnessing and unusual type of sleigh created among the local mushers. When he happened to cross their trails, he lost no opportunity of sizing up the teams which would be opposed to him in the race. He spent the evenings playing interminable cribbage games with his uncommunicative host.

Jeff Parton was a frequent visitor at the Ross ménage. He spent much time criticizing the Alaskan's methods of handling his dogs. Particular exception was taken by the freighter to the Mushing Terror's departure from the time honored practice of feeding sleigh dogs exclusively on frozen fish; and although Tim remained good natured in the face of Jeff's gibes he retaliated on one occasion by saying quietly:

"I've often heard tell fish was real good brain food; but I never heard it was muscle-building. I try to give my dogs what'll build up their strength, because they've got to use their bodies more than their heads. Any brain work to be done in a race falls to me, so I guess I'm the one who needs a fish diet."

One morning Jeff saw the Alaskan carrying water to his dogs before starting out on an exercise spin and said derisively:

"Good Lord, man, you do get some queer notions! Who ever heard tell of any one giving sleigh dogs water to drink in the Winter, when they can lap up all the snow they need to quench their thirst goin' along the trail?"

"You ever hear of lost motion?" Tim countered.

"What you mean—lost motion?" the freighter demanded.

"Apart from the fact that snow is supposed to be weakening taken instead of water, when a dog bends down to lap up a mouthful of snow on the trail he's likely to break his stride or throw the dog behind off his gait," the Alaskan explained patiently. "When every dog on a team is grabbing up snow at intervals it means lost motion—and I aim to have my dogs keep up a steady gait."

Jeff, after offering extravagant odds that his fish-fed, snow-lapping huskies could lick any spoon-fed malamutes this side of hell, departed and left Tim in peace.

The night before the race the Mushing Terror and Andrew Ross quit their cribbage earlier than was customary. Before turning in Tim said to the trader:

"Look here, Mr. Ross, I haven't much money to throw away. The trip from Alaska here was pretty expensive; but I've got transportation back to Nome paid for and fifty dollars I can spare without the dogs or me going short of eats on the way home. I've never been in one of these hundred-mile, non-stop races before; but I reckon if the weather holds clear like it has the last couple of days my dogs can make it in better time than the winner put up last year. My dogs may be small, but they're not weaklings; and they've got the edge on these local huskies for speed. Although, if a blizzard blows up, we mighn't stack up against 'em so well."

"You're going to have tough weather before you get back," Ross predicted. "I'm weather wise, Logan, and there's a blizzard in the offing. My guess is it'll blow up within the next twenty-four hours."

Logan gazed thoughtfully into space for a few seconds, then reached into his pocket and withdrew a small roll of bills. Peeling off five tens and pushing them

across the table to the trader, he looked whimsically at the shrunken remainder before shoving it back in his pocket and remarking:

"The grub's likely to be light, but we'll still eat, even if I don't win the race. I'd be much obliged if you'd get the best odds you can against the fifty that I win the race. I need the first money, and if I can make a bit extra it'll come in handy to open up a claim I located last year on the Panhandle. I hope you're a bum weather prophet, Mr. Ross; but, blizzard or not, I'll take a chance on my dogs romping home ahead of the field.

"For the love of Mike, though, Mr. Ross, don't you let Parton talk you into putting up any dough of your own on my layout. Even if the weather is good, a hell of a lot of things can happen in a dog race. If the weather is bad I've got to depend a lot more on my dogs than a musher who can step out lively and help pull his weight when the going is tough. I can hobble along behind the sleigh all right if it comes to a pinch; but this bum foot of mine ain't built for marathon running."

Ross smoothed the Alaskan's money out on the table, folded it meticulously and placed it in his pocket before replying.

"Well, lad, you got a hard day ahead of you," he said slowly. "Best crawl into bed now. Good luck," he added as the Mushing Terror limped toward the room which his host had assigned to him.

AT EIGHT o'clock the following morning seven dog teams were lined up on the frozen surface of the Stillwater River, on whose banks Pelican Portage was located, awaiting the pistol shot that would send them loping off along the wilderness trail to Clancy's Post, fifty miles distant, where the mushers' race cards would be signed by an association official before they headed back for town.

Andrew Ross had stationed himself at a vantage point on the river bank from which the progress of the teams could be watched until they left the river to turn into the bush trail a mile from the starting point.

Jeff Parton joined him just before the race started.

"There's only one team in it," Jeff announced dogmatically. "Them huskies of mine are in great fettle, Andy, and Slim is the slickest musher in the country. There won't no other get home within an hour of him."

"Money talks," the trader remarked briefly.

His old friend gave a start of surprise.

"Mean to say you're willin' to bet real money Slim don't bring home the bacon?" Jeff inquired. "You always let on you wasn't a bettin' man, Andy. Now who you figger's goin' to lick my outfit?"

"Logan," Andrew responded. "What odds'll you give me against him?"

"There's six other teams in the race. They'll all get home ahead of him," the freighter averred. "I'll give you six to one, Andy. How much you willin' to put up?"

"As much as you'll cover at those odds," Andrew responded gruffly.

"Three thousand bucks to five hundred do?" Jeff asked as the trader nodded. "There's the gun, Andy! They're away! Look at them huskies of mine makin' the pace. Them is real dogs, them is, Andy. Why, any one of 'em is worth any three of them puny malamute animals what ain't even got under way yet. I'll blow myself to a trip to California with that five hundred bucks of yours after the race is over, old-timer.

"Slim'll be back in town before ten tonight if the weather stays clear—and even if it's snowin' and blowin' to beat all hell, he'll be in by midnight. If them mangy curs your Mushin' Terror pal's drivin' get in before midnight, it'll be because they turned back before they reached the 25 Mile Camp."

WHEN the report of the starting gun rang in his ears, Tim Logan evinced no desire to make a speedy getaway. Better to hold his dogs back and let some of the more eager mushers break trail, he decided. Convinced though he was that his malamutes were equal to the hundred-mile journey, he knew it would be wise to conserve their strength.

Of the six other teams in the race, Tim considered his strongest opposition would come from the train driven by Slim Walsh and the string owned and driven by a French Canadian halfbreed known as Phillipe Levasseur, whom Walsh had defeated only by a matter of minutes in the previous year's race.

Slim Walsh, a top-notch musher, could not resist this opportunity for grandstand play; he was the first to get his dogs into action, followed closely by three other teams, which sped almost abreast along the packed river surface. Levasseur, like the Alaskan, was in no hurry to get away; but fell into fifth place with Tim following close behind him. The seventh competitor, Svenson, a newcomer to the district, was the last to start, his dogs becoming entangled in their harness just as the starting signal was given.

Slim Walsh dropped back into second place before the teams turned into the bush trail—an eight-mile stretch of portage leading out on to Loon Lake, a sixteen-mile expanse of snow-covered ice. At the far end of the lake the 25 Mile Camp marked the halfway point on the outward journey. From the 25 Mile Camp to Clancy's Post the route lay over alternate small frozen lakes and portages.

The Alaskan, still traveling sixth, swung his dogs into the bush trail a few yards behind Levasseur, who, looking back, called cheerily:

"You steek close to me Meester Terror. I no let you get off on wrong trail."

"That's a boy," Tim shouted back—and then, during the few seconds that his attention strayed from his malamutes, came disaster.

Svenson, after getting his dogs disentangled, had lost no time in catching up with the team ahead, and he entered the bush trail only a carriole length or so behind the Alaskan. At the moment when the Mushing Terror was exchanging pleasantries with the halfbreed, Svenson urged his dogs to pass the Alaskan.

Tim had no time to pull his dogs to one side of the narrow trail before Svenson's lead dog came abreast of his wheel dog.

Following the mixup at the starting line, Svenson's huskies were in a recalcitrant mood. Before either musher could intervene, the leader of the husky team, launching himself into the midst of Tim's malamutes, fastened his teeth in the bristling fur at the nape of one of the Alaskan dog's necks.

The rest of Svenson's team lost no time in joining in the mêlée. The malamutes, never unwilling to participate in a free-for-all, retaliated.

Tim was off his sleigh runners and in the midst of the howling, yapping, tearing canines with surprising speed, considering his disability, his whip butt striking indiscriminately at the heads of the marauding huskies.

Suddenly a huge gray shape leaped at Tim's throat. As he threw up a protecting arm he felt pointed fangs grinding into his wrist. At the same moment his injured foot caught in a tangled trace and he fell headlong into the snarling mass of blood crazed dogs.

Svenson, making futile efforts to drag his lead dog away from the malamutes, lost his head when he saw the Alaskan fall, threw his whip into the midst of the struggling pack now on top of the prostrate musher and helplessly stepped back out of danger's way.

Levasseur, hearing the sounds of discord, had stopped his team. He came dashing back to the scene.

"Pull off your dogs, you white livered cur!" the halfbreed yelled at the bewildered Svenson, at the same time div-

ing into the churning pack.

Tim, who was vainly attempting to regain his feet, felt himself grasped beneath the armpits and pulled clear of the huskies' rending teeth.

"Thanks," he gasped.

Then he immediately went into action again, this time ably assisted by Levasseur; while Svenson, recovering his nerve, joined in the task of beating the dogs into submission and tearing them from one another's throats.

When the job was accomplished and the three men were at liberty to survey the extent of the damage, Levasseur wheeled on Svenson.

"What right you got in dog race, fool?" he demanded. "Try and pass anoder team on narrow portage and not gif him chance to pull to side."

"Looks like I won't be makin' any more fool plays," Svenson responded somberly. "Take a peek at that lead dog of mine! His right foreleg's near tore off at the shoulder, and I ain't got another dog broke to the lead. Me for Pelican Portage with my bunch of cripples. What about you, Logan? D'you think your dogs are chewed up too bad to go ahead? Mighty sorry I landed you in this mess. Guess I ain't well enough up in this dog game to start in racin'."

Tim, who was feeling his panting malamutes over for broken bones and examining the flesh wounds which, by a miracle, seemed all the damage they had sustained, lifted a blood-stained face at the inquiry.

"They can make it all right."

"You hurt pretty bad yourself," the halfbreed interjected.

He noticed that one sleeve of the Alaskan's mackinaw was dyed a brilliant red, while a stream of blood was dripping from his left mitt and another from a cheek which had been laid open to the bone by a wolf-like claw. The Mushing Terror's clothes, he saw, were torn in a dozen places.

Tim grinned cheerfully.

"If the pups can make it, I can," he assured Levasseur. "It was mighty white of you to come back. You've lost a good quarter of an hour, and time counts a hell of a lot in a race like this."

"You watch me smoke now, Meester Terror. You good sport. Me good sport, too." And without further comment the halfbreed retraced his steps to his waiting team.

"You're in no shape to—" Svenson commenced; but Tim cut him short.

"We won't argue about it," the Alaskan said curtly. "I've got time to make up— Mush, you malamutes! Tell Ross I'm still in the race," he flung back over his shoulder, as his dogs once more got under way.

BY THE time Levasseur, followed closely by Tim, reached Loon Lake, the teams ahead were mere specks in the distance; but before the 25 Mile Camp was reached one of the trains was passed and only Walsh and two mushers known as Whip 'Em Up Johnson and Bert Saunders were ahead.

The custodian of 25 Mile had hot coffee and formidable ham and egg sandwiches waiting when the Alaskan and the halfbreed pulled in. The mushers bolted down the food while their dogs snatched a few minutes' respite, stretching out in the snow.

"Whip 'Em Up passed through here going like a bat out of hell near an hour ago," the dispenser of refreshments informed his latest guests. "He wouldn't even stop for a cup of coffee. My guess is his dogs'll be all in by the time he reaches Clancy's. Slim was a quarter of an hour after him and rested up for a few minutes, while Saunders come in right on Slim's tail and started off ahead of him. The weather's holdin' up well, boys; but believe me she's goin' to bust wide open before nightfall. You're goin' to run into heavy goin' before you get back to the Portage— What, pullin' out already? Well, I'll be lookin' for you on the way back about seven hours from now. Good luck to the both of

you."

It was early afternoon when, crossing a winding portage about six miles from Clancy's Post, Levasseur, who was still leading Tim, heard a dog team approaching and pulled away to the side of the narrow trail, yelling to Tim to do likewise.

Past the two stationary teams, on the way back to Pelican Portage loped a team of huskies, the animals slavering at the mouth and appearing to totter on their feet; behind them ran a huge Northerner, urging them on with hoarse yells and cracking his whip above their heads.

"He have to carry them dogs pretty soon," Levasseur called to Tim. "Crazy man, that Whip 'Em Up. Every year he do same thing and his dogs all in before he get back to 25 Mile. But never he learn sense."

"He's sure got a lead on us now," the Alaskan replied. "Want me to go ahead and set the pace for you the rest of the way to Clancy's, Levasseur?"

"Sure, you take the lead for while," the halfbreed agreed.

With Levasseur trailing him, the Mushing Terror resumed the journey. Four miles farther on, while they were crossing the last lake leading to the turning point, they met Slim Walsh, with Saunders close behind, already homeward bound.

"You'll have to hustle, Yank," the Parton driver taunted the Alaskan as their teams passed. "If we don't hear from you the next day or so, I'll send your mail up to the 25 Mile."

"If I haven't stopped off to collect it going through the Portage, you'd best forward it right on to Nome," Tim countered.

He eyed the dogs in the two homeward bound teams critically. Walsh's train, he saw, looked fairly fresh; but Saunders's canines were noticeably flagging and could not be expected much longer to keep up the gait at which they were travelling.

At Clancy's Post a Dog Racing Association official was on hand to sign Tim and Levasseur's race cards and direct them to a cook shack where coffee and food were awaiting them.

"Fish for your dogs over there," the official informed the mushers, indicating a sizable pile of frozen jackfish and pickerel.

Levasseur threw each of his dogs a frozen fish and disappeared into the cook shack; but Slim removed from a box which he was carrying on his sleigh a number of balls made of ground meat, tallow and egg, and distributed them among his malamutes.

"That's a new stunt on me," confessed the official, who interestedly watched the Alaskan.

"More nourishing than fish and easy to digest," Tim explained.

The association man was scanning the Alaskan's blood-stained face and generally disheveled appearance.

"What the hell you been doing to yourself?" he inquired. "Look like you crawled into a hollow log for a nap and found a cranky old she-bear curled up there already."

"Dogs got into a scrap," Tim explained.

"I'll put on some antiseptic and bandage you up," the official offered generously,

"No need," the Alaskan assured him. "The blood's congealed now, and I don't think it's best to open up the scratches again."

That which was left of the foot frozen years before was aching painfully; that shooting pains were running up his arm from his injured wrist and his head pounding abominably, the Mushing Terror thought it unnecessary to mention as he stumbled off to look after the needs of his inner man.

Levasseur was just leaving the cook shack when Tim entered.

"Off so soon?" the Alaskan inquired.

"Got to catch them other feller," the halfbreed replied, hastening away to rouse his reluctant dogs from the sleep they were snatching.

TIM took his time over his coffee and food. Half an hour's rest would do his dogs a lot of good, he decided. He had intended to allow them an hour; but the time lost in the mixup with Svenson's team must be made up somehow.

When the Alaskan again took his stand on his sleigh runners, the official, who was standing nearby, said:

"Some of the boys have got a big lead on you, Logan; you haven't got a chance of catching 'em. So if I was you I wouldn't bust myself or my dogs on the back trail."

"My dogs haven't stretched themselves yet," Tim rejoined. "Well, here goes for the second half." At a shrill whistle from their master the malamutes leaped into life and were off in the general direction of Pelican Portage.

Ten miles from Clancy's the Mushing Terror met the musher whom he and Levasseur had passed on Loon Lake on the outward journey.

"Still going strong?" Tim shouted.

"You betcha," responded the other. "I'll finish the course if it takes a week. You other guys might all drop dead or something, and I might pull down the first money yet."

"Thank the Lord all the optimists aren't dead," Tim rejoined, and shouted a word of encouragement to his straining malamutes.

"Levasseur must be pushing those huskies of his," the Alaskan told himself as the miles passed with no sign of the halfbreed. "I'm making better time than I did coming out and ought to have picked him up by now."

The Alaskan was almost at the 25 Mile Camp before he overtook Levasseur, whose dogs had been driven hard and were showing signs of distress.

"Everything O.K?" Tim asked as he drew abreast of the other team.

"Sure," Levasseur responded. "You goin' fine, Meester Terror. Travel like hell and you soon pass Slim and the other fellers."

The Alaskan did not pull up at the 25 Mile Camp. A wind which had sprung up an hour or so before was freshening, and snow was beginning to fall. Darkness would set in long before he reached Pelican Portage. His dogs still had some reserve strength, and they would need it all before the race was over.

As he passed the huddle of log buildings which comprised the 25 Mile Camp, Tim saw the disconsolate Whip 'Em Up Johnson standing beside a carriole to which was attached a string of utterly exhausted huskies, unable even to rise to their feet in response to their master's reiterated commands.

Half a mile or so out on Loon Lake the Alaskan passed Saunders, only six of his dogs now pulling, and they half-heartedly, while the remaining two huskies of his team were being hauled on the carriole.

The snow was falling faster, the wind increasing in strength. Tiny frozen particles whipped and stung the musher's face. The tails of his dogs, which had hitherto been held high, commenced to droop—a sign of real fatigue. The veteran leader looked around reproachfully at the usually merciful master, who was now urging him and his team mates on mercilessly, only to be greeted with a shout of:

"Mush, damn you, Candle! This is a race you're in!"

The sky darkened; swirling snow obscured the vision for more than a few feet ahead, and the noise of the gale rose from a whine to a shriek. At length even the lead dog was no longer visible to the driver. The trail of Walsh's carriole was obliterated by the driving, shifting snow, though still apparent to Candle's questing nose and feet.

Suddenly the lead dog stopped short, his team mates tumbling forward over him. Candle whined, pawed and smelled at the snow, then hesitantly wheeled off to the left and started away again.

Tim was scarcely aware of the change of direction. His head was throbbing as if some one were using it for an anvil;

his eyes were almost blinded by the pounding, biting wind and snow; his torn wrist felt as if it were pricked with white-hot needles. The numb sensation replacing the agonizing pain in his once frozen foot warned the musher that it was freezing again.

He mustn't stand on the runners a second longer. That knowledge slowly penetrated the Alaskan's waning consciousness. He must hobble along behind the sleigh as best he could; but he must grasp the handlebars lest the dogs get away and he be pitched forward into the snow, there to lie until there was nothing but a frozen body to retrieve.

Tim failed to hear a voice shouting behind him. He and his dogs seemed alone in a blizzard-swept world. When a hand grasped his arm, his bemused brain thought it the hand of death until a human voice sounded in his ears and jerked him back to the realization that he was still a living entity.

"You off the trail!" Levasseur was yelling. "Your dogs leave Slim's trail and follow fresh trapper's trail. My dogs get mixed too. Trail very fresh, not yet blown in, and I get on knees and find your sleigh mark. You follow me! We beat it to portage and still got time for catch Slim."

Full sensibility slowly returned to the Mushing Terror.

"You are a white man!"

A hurried grip of Levasseur's hand, then away again; the halfbreed and his team led infallibly to the portage, with Tim's dogs pressing close behind.

The bush trail at last. A sudden respite from the wind, a packed surface for a few minutes; then snow piled high in the trail where the wind had swept through a break in the stunted trees.

"You go on! You go on!" The halfbreed's insistent voice was scolding, commanding. "My dogs not so fresh. You break trail and catch Slim."

The Alaskan was leading Levasseur now. He must be halfway across the portage. A glance behind. No sign of the halfbreed. He must wait for him; no, that didn't make sense. Walsh was still ahead. This was a race, and he must pass Slim. Levasseur wouldn't lose out through being a good sport; but he couldn't do anything for him unless he passed Walsh.

"Mush, you malamutes! Put your back into it, Candle boy!"

A team ahead... Walsh looking back. . . . Walsh sticking doggedly to the center of the trail.

"Pull over and let me pass!" The attempted cry was only a croak.

Walsh had heard, yet he merely sent back a mocking laugh and still clung to the middle of the trail.

"Pull over, damn your hide!"

Still Walsh only laughed.

"All right then! Mush, you malamutes!"

He must crowd Walsh to the side. Candle was now even with the other man's carriole.

Tim's befogged brain wrestled with the problem. He must hobble ahead and run at Candle's side, a bulwark between his malamutes and Walsh's huskies.

One snarling husky—tired, but not too tired to be vicious—snapped at the Alaskan's legs as he passed and gave an outraged howl as the musher brought down the butt of his whip on its head.

They were at last safely past Walsh. Tim's aching feet could not bear his weight any longer. He rode on the sleigh runners again.

"MUSH, you malamutes!"

Candle and his team mates were weary; but they were not quitters, those malamutes. Their master demanded more speed, and more speed they would give him, though their pounding hearts stopped with the effort.

Walsh was out of sight now, and the end of the portage was near. A sudden turn in the trail—a dark mass ahead; the dogs pulling back on their haunches and Tim lurching forward and sidewise.

A crunching sound in his chest as he fell full force on a jagged tree stump. A yell behind, then Walsh was dragging his huskies off into the bush around the tree which had fallen across the trail; Levasseur, close behind, followed suit.

"You all right, Meester Terror?"

"Go ahead, Levasseur. I'm fine."

Drawing himself to his feet again with the aid of the handlebars, Tim staggered for a moment, then stood erect. The pain in his chest was agonizing—but what was one more ache on top of all the rest? This was just a bad nightmare— No, by the Lord, it was a race!

"Pull yourself together, man!" The self-administered command served as a tonic. He must get the dogs around the obstruction in the trail.

"Mush, you malamutes!"

They were back on the trail again, and there was the river right ahead. Lights were dimly discernible through the hurtling snow. Only a mile more to go; but two teams were ahead of him.

No, they weren't! His dogs were still the speediest, and he was abreast of Walsh and Levasseur, racing neck and neck.

The halfbreed yelled, and Slim cursed. A crowd shrieked and cheered in the distance.

"Mush, you malamutes!"

Where was his whip? Must have dropped it back at the fallen tree, he thought. But what need had he for a whip, now? He was leading the field. Candle had raced before and knew what was expected of him.

"Mush, you malamutes! Keep it up, Candle! Mush, you sons of guns, mush!"

The other teams were well behind; but he must stop and let Levasseur pass. The halfbreed had earned the race. But if he stopped Walsh might be the one to win. He must race on.

"Mush, you malamutes!"

He repeated the cry wildly, almost unconsciously, as the storm lashed him. He was near, and nearer. A heavy darkness seemed to be crushing him, and desperately he clung to the handlebars. Suddenly there was a blur of voices about him, and men were crowding in on him. It was only then that he knew he had crossed the line.

He gritted his teeth—mustn't do anything silly like keeling over now. With difficulty he managed a grin, muttering:

"Thanks, thanks. . . . Feeling fine. Want to see the other boys finish. Here they come!"

"Walsh's second."

"No, it's Levasseur!"

"Come on, Slim!"

"You've got him, Phil."

Some one was shouting in his ear:

"What a race! What a finish! Never anything like it before. You put up a record, Logan—under thirteen hours. Levasseur only three minutes behind you, and his lead dog wasn't half a length ahead of Slim's when they crossed the line."

It was silly to feel so rotten after just winning a race; but he'd have to get away from the crowd. More than anything else in the world he wanted to be sick; but a curious sense of propriety steeled him and conquered his nausea. He heard some one address him and he turned to face Andrew Ross.

"Hello, Mr. Ross. No, it wasn't a bad race. . . . Sure, I'm feeling fine; but I think I'll drive the dogs up to your place, feed 'em and bed 'em down. They've had a middlin' tough trip. . . .

"No, there's nothing wrong with me. But I guess I'll beat it. Just a minute though; are these men the judges? . . . Gentlemen, I want you to switch the purses and give Levasseur first money and me second. No, I'm not off my head. This is Levasseur's race. He wasted time helping me out of a mess at the start and then went out of his way to put me back on the trail when I went astray in the blizzard coming home. Best sport I ever met— You'll do it? That's fine. See you all at the dance a bit later— On your feet there, Candle. Mush, you malamutes!"

JEFF PARTON paid his bet with good grace.

"Well, here's my check, Andy. I guess that's once I got a team of dogs figgered out wrong."

For once in his life Andrew Ross waxed loquacious.

"The malamutes are good, all right, Jeff," he agreed, "but it wasn't only on the dogs your figgering was wrong. Where you went astray, to my mind, Jeff, is that you didn't pay enough attention to the human factor. There are men as well as dogs in a race. . . .

"Logan? Sure, he's getting on fine. He says so himself, and I guess he ought to know. Doc says there's only four ribs broken where he cracked into that stump; his wrist's a nasty mess where that husky bit him, but Doc says it'll heal all right in time.

"Tim says he's fine, though, and with any luck when he comes back next year he figgers he ought to be able to make the hundred-mile course in twelve hours flat, if the weather ain't any worse than it was this time."

"Well," said Jeff Parton, "the next time I bet, you can be damned sure I won't forget the human factor."

Landfall

By BILL ADAMS

SUNSETS were beautiful out at sea, an' the winkin' stars, an' the mystery
O' the wanin' moon on a windy night. An' great was the day when a rival ran
Swift abeam, an' hour by hour, an' day by day, we tried our hardest to steal away;
An' we left her at last, hull down, maybe; or she showed us clean heels. An' memory
Harks backward to evenin's spent by the hatch wi' a shipmate yarnin',
Or a dance, or a snatch from an old man's throat, or a young lad's lips,
Of a song of the sort that we sang when ships dotted the oceans up an' down
'Twixt Foochow Port an' Boston Town; 'twixt Sydney Heads an' the Strait of Dover,
From Anjer Point to Ushant Light the whole seas over was dotted wi' canvas,
White as snow, an' the sperm an' the bowhead watched us go.
An' what was the finest time, ye'd know?
Ah, bide a bit till I think on the very best of it!
I never yet saw sailorman but his blood leapt fast when the skipper ran
Bellowing out from his chartroom door, as the squall broke free
Wi' its blastin' roar; an' the gray old devil-surgin' sea
Rolled over the long decks murderously; an' the masts they whipped,
An' the spars they buckled, while the hard storm-canvas we grimly knuckled.
There never was a sailor worth the name but gloried in playin' *that* sailor game!
An' by that same token, 't was joy we knew when the sea lay flat an' the sky
Shone blue; an' a ship sailed onward night an' day
In the azure waters where trade winds play. But once awhile,
On misty night, or maybe starry, or by daylight. In sun, or fog,
Or snow, or rain, we'd come to the inshore seas again
Where the gulls wheeled round an' the kelp washed past;
Wi' tense forms high upon the mast, wi' watchful eyes across the sea,
We'd search for the land where we would be.
An' sudden there'd ring a joyous hail at sight o' our pilot's bellied sail!

Tolliver Radd

By the Author of "The Moonshiner"

HOWARD ELLIS DAVIS

THOUGH the Autumn air was only crisply cool, a fire of pine knots roared up the chimney. In front of the fire was a great round tub, homemade, built in the fashion of a small tank with its cypress staves bound about by stout iron hoops. Amid the steam that vapored up from the water in the tub sat Tolliver Radd.

His thick white hair, damp from its recent scrubbing, curled up at the ends, just above his shoulders. His long white beard, broad and flat, flowed down over his great hairy chest. Dropping the wash cloth, he stood erect in the tub, broad and straight, a mighty figure of a man.

Mose, the negro house servant, handed him a rough towel, and he began vigorously drying the upper part of his body. Even in his bathing his movements were quick and positive. His eighty years sat lightly upon him.

"My drawers," he said as he stepped from the tub.

Mose extended to him a bit of striped silk.

"What is that?" Tolliver Radd demanded, staring at the garment in the negro's hand.

"Dese here is underwears," Mose told him.

"Under hell! That ain't no underwear. What is it?"

"I doan know, Mist' Tolliver. Lawd knows, I doan know what 'tis; but dat's what Miss Sary call 'em—underwears. Dey's silk. You gwine wear 'em to de banquet."

The big man took the pair of highly colored shorts from Mose and held them against his waistline. Throwing back his head, he roared with laughter. Then he doubled the silken garment in his hand and threw it at Mose's head.

"Give me my long cotton drawers, nigger. Don't stand there grinnin' like a ape."

"Miss Sary ain' give me no drawers. An' dey ain' none in de bureau. Dey's

all lak dat."

"Sary!" Tolliver Radd bellowed.

Her voice replied to him from the next room, and he then shouted:

"Damnation, woman! What in hell do you mean by takin' off all my undergarmints an' leavin' nothin' in their place but these here monkey duds?"

The door opened, and Sarah, his wife —a pretty, plump woman fifty years his junior—appeared.

"Tolliver, you do blaspheme so. If the Lord was to strike you dead—"

"That's beside the p'int. I want my drawers."

"A man who's chairman of a bank board, an' is goin' to eat a banquet with the other directors, must dress accordin'," she told him patiently.

A towel about his waist, he stood glaring at her.

"In the name of decency, woman—in the name of self-respect—go git me some drawers."

"Tolliver, I gave them long drawers of yourn to the niggers on the place."

Turning to Mose, he said in a hushed voice, just above a whisper:

"What do you think of that? Now, what do you think of that?"

Mose, white-eyed, stared back at him. He himself was wearing a pair of those drawers, shortened by a foot. He was so afraid Sarah would divulge the fact that he owned a pair, that his knees began to tremble. But Sarah, her apron at her face, had begun to sniffle.

"I do try so hard to keep you up to date," she complained. "An' that's the way you 'preciate what I does. Blasphemin' an'—an'—"

Tolliver Radd strode across the room.

"There, there, honey," he said, patting her shoulder. "Don't red up yo' pretty eyes weepin' over me. I'll wear the damn things ef it gives you any pleasure. My legs will be under the table, anyhow."

He had just donned the despised garment and the sleeveless shirt that went with it, and had fastened about his muscular calves the supporters that held up the sheer silk socks which Mose had found in place of the heavy yarn, when there was a timid knock at the door that led into the hall.

"Who is it?" he demanded, straightening in his chair.

THE door opened, and a shaggy head of unkempt hair, straggling from beneath a battered old felt hat, appeared around its edge. A small body followed, and Nate Dingby sidled into the room. On his wizened face, with its big, drooping mustache, was a look of blank amazement as he stared at Tolliver Radd.

Tolliver arose and turned slowly about before his friend. Nate sank weakly to the edge of a chair.

"You dad-blamed, hairy-legged tomcat!" he gasped.

"These here is stylish garmints, you little swamp-runnin' varmint. The latest fashion."

"I've seen pictures of 'em," Nate said. "But I never did think no friend of mine ever would git down to 'em." He glanced at the black broadcloth coat draped over a chair, on the lapel of which Tolliver's great-granddaughter, Ruth, descendant of a former wife, already had pinned a small white blossom. "Goin' to a buryin'?"

"Bank directors' meetin' over at Jardice this afternoon at three o'clock. Then we eat a banquet tonight. They've 'lected me chairman of the boa'd. I'm goin' over an' tell them fellers what they got to do, like I been tellin' 'em for the last ten year. Our bank is the only one left in the county, an' it's goin' to stay left.

"I've spoke it all out to Ruth. She taken it down in shorthand an' writ it out on her typewriter. Sounds fine an' edicated. That's what college schoolin' does for a gal.

"I'll make Jo Tyson, the president of the bank, read it. There's another one with edication. Found him teachin' school over in the Wagin Rim settle-

mint. Knowed, soon as I sized him up, he was honest an' had the knack of handlin' money. When I had kicked some confidence into his craw, I got him a job in the bank; an' I'll be dad-blamed ef he ain't one of the best bankers in the State! Tries to give me all the credit. Says I made him. Don't do no good to tell him it was myself I was thinkin' of when I persuaded him to jine up with me in a business way.

"We're strong at the bank, Nate. We got resources. An' we're goin' to stay that way. But we're goin' to live an' let live. We'll worry along with them who owes us money. Ain't a-goin' to fo'ce nobody to liquidate, as they calls it, to pay us. Ain't never nothin' left but the liquid, nohow, when you fo'ce a man to it."

"Them's fine sentimints, Tolliver," Nate piped, "but they sort of misfires, comin' from somebody who looks so much like a monkey climbin' a stick."

"You won't never learn nothin' up to date," the big man said in disgust.

"Tolliver, I don't know nothin' 'cept what folks tells me; but they say Gray McKomas sho' has got his business in a jam. Knowin' him an' Ruth is rale friendly, thought I'd come by an' tell you."

"How did Gray git jammed up, Nate?"

"You know he's loggin' that there Sampey section of timber."

"Already got at least a million foot of logs cut an' on the creek, waitin' for a rise. The rise has come. Why don't he git 'em in the water?"

"Them Sampey boys has had that timber junked."

"What you mean, junked?"

"Lawyer business, Tolliver; lawyer business. He can't move a foot of them logs."

"Injunked, you ignoratus! How did that happen?"

"Waal, you know old Will Sampey, their paw, 'fo' he passed on, borrowed money on that there section of timber land; an' it got fo'closed on him."

"He never tried to redeem it, Nate. The price of the timber went down below what he had borrowed, and he jest let it go."

"Them Sampey boys are claimin' they didn't know their paw had ever mortgaged the land. They're goin' to prove, they say, that when he done it he was unsound of wind an' limb."

"Mind an' body, Nate," Tolliver corrected. "Mind an' body is what you mean."

"Have it yo' way. An' they are claimin' they never seen nothin' of the money."

"Why, Nate, that money—or some money—is on safe deposit with the bank at Jardice. Them boys are paid intrust regular. They're a bunch of deadbeat crooks, the three of 'em."

"I know that, Tolliver. They always has been. They've layed for Gray, an' they've got him where the wool is short. The time of redemption havin' passed, he bought the timber from Sam Wilton, who owned it. That taken most of his money. The rest went gittin' them million foot of logs to the creek. In fact, he got his hands to agree to put off the last pay day till he had delivered the logs he has cut. Now these here Sampeys an' their slick lawyer comes along an' ties up the logs an' makes it a co't matter."

"Git a thing into co't an' it's like bein' in a leaky boat in rough water," Tolliver remarked. "You mought pull through; but you're so nigh drowned they ain't much difference."

"He ain't got no money to fight 'em, Tolliver. They'll fo'ce him out an' fill the order he's got with the logs he's cut an' hauled to the creek. They'll not only pick his flesh; they'll gnaw his bones as well."

"I tried to git Gray McKomas to go into a timber deal with me, Nate. Offered to furnish the teams an' put up the money to operate on, ef he'd take charge an' log off a slipe of timber up the river, an' we'd divide fifty-fifty on the profits. He turned down my proposition."

"Gray is a independent cuss. Jest like him to turn you down, Tolliver. But they got him haltered now."

"Mose, git me my boots an' the breeches that goes with 'em."

"What you aimin' to do now, Tolliver?" Nate demanded.

"I'm goin' over an' see ef I can't horn in on this here deal of Gray's on Minon Creek."

"An' him with the whole durned thing tied up tighter'n a new shoe over a sore corn?"

Tolliver Radd chuckled.

"They's mo' ways of killin' a cat 'sides shootin' it with silver bullets, Nate. An' Gray is too good a bet to let go by—Didn't you hear me, nigger? Why're you standin' there with yo' eyes hangin' out? Git them other clothes."

"Mist' Tolliver, ain' we gwine eat dat banquet? I was gwine help in de kitchen, an'—"

"I'll banquet you, nigger, ef you don't git a wiggle on. Never mind the clothes. I'll git 'em out the closet. Go to the sto'-room an' throw some rations together. You're goin' an' cook for me. Take whatever you can put yo' hands on. The car is already at the gate. Have 'em in the car in five minutes."

"How 'bout dese heah Sunday clothes I got on?"

Tolliver Radd made a threatening movement, and Mose sped to the door.

"Yas, suh; yas, suh, Mist' Tolliver. Consider 'em already in de car."

"No; I'm not goin' to Jardice," Tolliver said when his wife swept into the room, just as he drew on the big rawhide boots that reached to his knees. "Shame to steal Jo Tyson's thunder, anyhow. I'll send him my message to read to the others."

Sarah turned and sternly eyed Nate.

"Meddlin' as usual, I suppose," she said bitingly.

Nate twitched nervously and took off his hat, but remained silent.

"Where are you goin', Tolliver Radd?" she demanded, turning to the big man as he arose and placed the wide brimmed black hat on his long, snowy locks.

"Goin' over to where Gray McKomas is loggin' on the Minon. Mought make a little deal with him."

"I heard you blasphemin' 'bout Gray McKomas till my ears rang, Tolliver Radd. Said you'd git him hemmed up some day an' he'd come crawlin' to you for mercy. Said you'd then put yo' heel on him an' grind him till his eyes popped out. Them's yo' very words, Tolliver Radd, awful as they sounds."

The big man chuckled.

"Maybe I'm goin' over an' do a little grindin'."

"What's that you're going to do to Gray McKomas?"

Ruth, his great-granddaughter—a slender, brown eyed girl of twenty—stood in the doorway.

"What's that to you?" he demanded, his blue eyes twinkling. "Didn't you say you was through with anybody who didn't have sense enough to line up in a business way with yo' gran'daddy?"

"If you do any of the things you've threatened to do to Gray, I'll—I'll—"

"Only goin' over an' see ef I can't make a little deal with him. Ef Mahomidy won't come to the mountain, the mountain must go to Mahomidy."

HAVING given instructions to stable Nate's mare against his return, Tolliver and the little man entered the automobile. Mose at the wheel, they swept away on the twenty-mile drive to Minon Creek. A mile before they reached the log landing, they turned into a narrow, weed grown road—little more than a trail—which wound its way through the woods to the log cabin where dwelled the Sampey brothers.

"Tolliver," Nate said, a bit nervously, "you know as well as I the stripe of them varmints you're undertakin' to deal with. Kal ain't got much sense, but he'll do anything the other two tells him. Ruk would cut a man's throat, an' laugh at his death strangle. Jude is the slick one. He's sly as a mink. He'd do

anything that Ruk would; an' he's got sense enough to git away with it. It's him you've got to watch mo' than the others."

"I'll be watchin' 'em all," Tolliver Radd assured him.

Mose, who had overheard, nervously turned his head.

"We ain' gwine call on dem folks, is we, Mist' Tolliver?"

"I'll do the callin'," Tolliver Radd assured him. "You an' Nate will set out in front an' wait for me."

As they stopped before the one-room log cabin with its lean-to kitchen, the big man hailed. At his call Jude's head appeared through a crack in the door. It was hastily withdrawn and the door closed. When it opened again, Tolliver was out of the car, through the gate and halfway to the cabin.

When, at Jude's obsequious invitation, he entered, and the door closed after him, Nate sat listening tensely for what might occur within. He could hear Radd's rumbling voice and Jude's whining drawl. He heard Ruk's voice raised, sharply combative. He heard the sudden overturning of a chair and the fall of a body to the floor. Quickly he snatched up a wheel wrench from the bottom of the car and got out.

"Doan' you worry," Mose said, grinning confidently. "Ef dey rile Mist' Tolliver, he gwine mangle dat white trash."

Tolliver's voice boomed out again, and Nate breathed a sigh of relief. Then the door opened and the big man called to him.

The room was redolent with the smell of unwashed bodies and unaired bedclothing. Tolliver Radd stood in the middle of the floor. On a bench before him huddled the three Sampey brothers. Jude, slight of build, with short, oily black hair sticking close to his small head, had a cowed, frightened look on his narrow face. Kal, gaunt and rawboned, nervously twisted his hands. Ruk was big, bestial, with a receding forehead and thick red lips shadowed by a thin mustache. His small eyes were smoldering in suppressed rage as he nursed a bruise on the side of his head. Tolliver Radd blew on the knuckles of his right hand, flexed his fingers and said:

"Nate, I've persuaded these here fellers to settle the little timber deal they got with Gray McKomas peaceable an' amiable, in a friendly manner. They've agreed with me that there wouldn't be nothin' gained by draggin' it through the co'ts, while the logs is layin' up there at the landin' for the worms to eat. They've acknowledged that they really haven't got no claim on the timber nohow, an' that the money in the bank at Jardice is that which their paw got when he mortgaged the land.

"But in order to wind up everything quiet and peaceable, I'm goin' to give 'em five hundred dollars for a quit-claim to the land in dispute. That lets them out of it altogether. Ain't that so; ain't that what we agreed on?" he demanded, turning to the three on the bench.

"Yes, sir," Jude said quickly. "That's it."

From the pocket of his coat Tolliver Radd drew a narrow checkbook and placed it on a deal table. He unscrewed the cap from his fountain pen. In a sort of fascination, Jude's eyes rested on the checkbook.

"We wants our money in cash," Ruk growled.

"Whatever amount I write in a check is same as cash," Tolliver assured him. "I'll make it out to Jude. When he gives it to Jo Tyson at the bank in Jardice, Jo will give him the money."

"That's right, Ruk," Jude said. "Mr. Radd's check will be same as money."

He came and stood at Tolliver Radd's shoulder, while the big, bearded man slowly wrote out the check.

Radd drew from his coat pocket a long envelop, removed the letter therein, and flourished his pen over the back of the envelop.

"Now I'll write out this here quit-claim. These boys can't none of 'em

read nor write, Nate. I want you to witness their mark as they tetches the pen at the bottom of this here docimint."

"Mr. Radd," Jude said, "make that there thing read 'for one dollar in hand paid an' other valuable considerations'."

"What's that for?" Radd demanded.

Jude wriggled and dropped his eyes to the floor.

"Waal, you see, we've sort of bragged that we'd make a killin' out of this here timber by pinchin' Gray McKomas. We kin make it seem that we—that we got mo' out of you for a quit-claim."

Tolliver Radd chuckled throatily.

"Honest confession is good for the soul, Jude. An' ef it'll help yo' pride any, I don't keer what I write into the durned thing."

When the document was finished, Tolliver read it aloud, and Jude nodded approvingly. Then each of the Sampeys made his cross mark, which was witnessed by Nate.

"You-all will stay an' eat supper with us, won't you, Mr. Radd?" Jude invited. "The nigger kin go on down to Gray's camp."

"Sorry, Jude, but I got to git things stirrin'. I reckin lots of Gray's men has drifted off when it looked like the jig was up. We must git them logs in the water. We're goin' to need some mo' help. Ef you boys want to jine in, there'll be good wages in it for you."

Jude had taken the proposition that had been forced upon him so sportingly that Radd had begun to wonder if he hadn't judged the man just a bit harshly.

"Be glad to, Mr. Radd," Jude said quickly. "Be glad to."

As they again entered the car, Nate remarked:

"That there Jude Sampey has got somethin' up his sleeve. He's too oily tongued, the slinkin' varmint!"

"Don't be so suspicious minded, Nate. Jude come across like a man when he seen the jig was up."

"Waal, you better watch him."

"The time for watchin' is past, Nate. This here docimint in my pocket takes them plum' out the picture."

He felt highly elated. Throatily, he hummed a snatch of song:

"'Oh, tiddle-dum, tiddle-dum, tiddle-dum-te-te; the wasp got drunk with the bumble-bee.' Won't Gray set up an' take notice, though, when he finds his skin has been saved?"

"Liable as not to tell you to take yo' nose out of his business an' mind yo' own affairs," Nate said pessimistically.

"That's right, he sho' mought," Tolliver Radd said, sobering. "Now that would be plum' hell, wouldn't it?"

THEY rolled out presently upon a broad, cleared space on Minon Creek, where thousands of logs lay waiting to be hauled to the water's edge and rolled into the stream. At one side was a small tent where Gray McKomas had his quarters, adjoining a fly stretched over a cook stove and a long table where his sawyers and log haulers had eaten. A few men idled about, sitting dejectedly on the logs, while over the place brooded the silence of inactivity.

Seated upon a small goods box, elbows resting on knees, chin cupped in his hands, Gray McKomas was alone in his tent. He made no move to rise when Tolliver Radd stood before him; he merely looked up and said morosely—

"What do *you* want?"

"Jest thought I'd drap by an' see ef you an' me couldn't rig up a deal to handle this here slipe of timber together. Looks to me like you got a right nice proposition. All of a million foot on the bank, which ain't a fifth of what is still standin'—as pretty timber as I ever see. I've got a order from one of the mills at the mouth of the river it would fit in fine. Lot of bill stuff in the order at fancy prices."

"Go right ahead and gloat over me," the young man said bitterly. "That's what you've come for. You know that I'm tied up, that I'm—I'm ruined! You said that some day I'd come crawling to you, begging for help; but I'm a long

way from that, Tolliver Radd."

"You ain't a man to crawl to nobody, Gray. That's one reason I'd like for you to go in with me an' handle some of my business. Why is it, son, you're so sot agin jinin' up with me? I'd like mighty well to have you."

The expression on the young man's face changed.

"I believe you mean that, Mr. Radd." He smiled sadly. "I wanted to prove myself—to show that I was fully competent to handle my own business—before I went into any deals with you. And this is what I've got into. I'm afraid even you couldn't straighten this matter out satisfactorily. Those Sampeys—"

With a gesture of his hand Tolliver Radd silenced him.

"They're out of it. It only taken a little argimint, an' a little persuasion—" he flexed the fingers of his right hand—"to make 'em see the light o' day. I got a paper sayin' they're out of it. Of course, as things is now cleared up, the road is open befo' you. You can go ahead single handed; but I'd like mighty well to chip in with you. You an' me could do great things together, Gray."

The young man leaped to his feet and grasped Tolliver Radd's hand.

"Mr. Radd, you're the whitest man I ever met. If you can overlook the blunderings of a young fool, and are broad enough to—"

"Hold on, son. Don't be pinnin' no virtues on to me. Selfish is my middle name. Selfish an' mule-headed. I always like to have my way."

Gray McKomas laughed.

"Where do we go from here?"

"First thing is to start gittin' these here logs in the water. You an' me an' Nate, with what men you got left, will start. I see there's still a team or two in the lot. I'll send my nigger in the car to round up some mo' hands. The Sampey boys will be down. We still got three hours of daylight. By workin' all night we kin have 'em in the water by daylight in the mornin'. You'll go down with the drive. Me an' Nate an' a couple will drift along behind an' clean up."

During the balance of the afternoon and throughout the night they labored mightily. Mose kept them supplied with tins of hot coffee. His coat and top shirt off, his great arms bare, Tolliver Radd, armed with a canthook, did the work of three men. An hour before dawn the logs were all in the water.

When daylight came McKomas and a small crew, carrying long spike poles, half of the men on each side of the creek, followed its course downstream, fending the logs from the bank and keeping as many of them as possible adrift. On a billy, made by fastening two great logs together. Tolliver Radd followed on the clean-up. He was accompanied by Jude and Kal Sampey and Nate. Nate and Kal were on the bank. Jude rode the billy. Tolliver was surprised and pleased when Jude came to him and asked that he and Kal be allowed to accompany him on the clean-up. Ruk Sampey had not put in an appearance.

It was the task of the clean-up crew to work loose logs that had become lodged. Tolliver Radd and Jude would handle those which could be reached only from the water, while Kal and Nate worked from the bank. On the billy were tin buckets containing lunches for the four of them, Tolliver's coat and a couple of extra canthooks. With a long spike pole he guided the unwieldy craft, while Jude squatted at the rear end, ready to lend assistance when needed.

For two hours they had been drifting down the winding stream. For nearly an hour Tolliver had seen nothing of Nate and Kal. He wondered what had become of them, as several times their help was needed in dislodging logs that had been stranded against the bank. The billy entered a straight stretch of several hundred yards. Ahead of him in a bend Tolliver could see a number of logs gathered in an eddy. Pushing vigorously against the bottom with the spike pole, he set the billy's course

straight for the logs.

Standing erect, his long white beard blown by the wind, while Jude squatted on the timbers behind him, he was just poising himself to spring out on the logs in the eddy when, on the bush fringed bank, a rifle cracked. His wide brimmed black hat flew from his head. Straight and hard, the water flying up in a spray, he lunged into the creek and disappeared beneath the muddy surface. Swinging sidewise, the billy slapped solidly against the logs and came to rest.

Presently, near the bank beyond the logs, hidden beneath sweeping foliage that trailed the water, his white head reappeared. He was in the acute angle of the bend across which the logs had jammed, leaving this corner clear. In the flash of an eye he had seen the only possible refuge and had dived beneath the logs. From here he could see without being seen. Gingerly he felt the place where the bullet had torn through his thick locks, and the slight abrasion where it had seared his scalp.

Jude leaped out on the logs from the billy. Presently, rifle in hand, Ruk walked out upon the jam, from the place where the ends of the logs rested against the bank.

"I got him, smack through the head," Ruk said savagely. "I bided my time; but I knowed I'd git him."

"An' spiled my game," Jude replied, mouthing in his rage.

"What was yo' game?"

"To use him alive. They was big money in it, the way I had it planned."

"Why didn't you say so?"

"Couldn't find you to say nothin'. 'Stid of showin' up at the landin', you slipped off in the woods. I been hopin' you'd show up to help me. I knowed you had the rifle. Kal has took Nate Dingby back to the house. An' now you've spiled everything. You never did have no sense. How you aim for me to explain things when he's found floatin' in the creek with a bullet through his head?"

"Don't aim for him to float. We'll fish him out from under them logs an' put sand in his clothes. Hand me the spike pole. I'll snag him out with that there hook on the end."

Tolliver Radd had hoped that the two, thinking him dead, would leave. At any moment now they might discover his hiding place. He would have to take the initiative while there was yet time. Rifle in hand, his back turned, Ruk stood near the edge of the logs nearest him, waiting for Jude to bring the spike pole.

In water only shoulder deep, the big man waded silently out from beneath the bushes. Stretching out a long arm, he seized the would-be murderer by the ankle and jerked him backward into the water.

Crouching below the surface, he held the squirming man until his struggles ceased. Then, rising like an old man of the sea, he cast Ruk, gasping, out upon the logs. Scrambling hastily out, he looked about for Jude.

Suddenly, from the high bank, a canthook, thrown end on, struck the side of his head. In a shimmer of sparks the world was blotted out. He fell limply across the logs.

WHEN Tolliver regained consciousness, Ruk, still occasionally coughing out water, had recovered his rifle and was squatting in silence, watching him menacingly. Jude roughly prodded him in the side with his foot.

"Git up," he said.

Tolliver Radd sat up. His hands had been tied behind him. His head swam dizzily. But with the help of the two he managed to get upon his feet. On his knees he scrambled up the steep bank. Ruk, with the rifle, followed close behind. From the billy Jude retrieved his coat, in the pocket of which was his checkbook.

They found Nate at the house, securely tied in a chair and guarded by Kal, who sat with an old-fashioned horse pistol in his lap. In an unending

stream of words the little man was abusing his captor.

"Whew!" Kal breathed with relief, mopping his stupid face. "I'm glad you fellers come. This here little skeeter bite done worded me till I'm plum' wore down."

Now that he had Tolliver Radd at his mercy, Jude had turned from cringing subserviency to a vengeful authority. With the most obscene epithets he abused the big man.

"Set down at that table," he ordered.

When Tolliver Radd had taken his place at the table, Jude armed himself with the old horse pistol and stood behind him.

"Now, Ruk," he said, "you stand over there with the rifle, out of reach; an' ef he makes a bobble, shoot his durned heart out. Kal, cut them strings off his arms."

When Tolliver's arms were free, Jude placed the checkbook and fountain pen before him on the table.

"You thought you had put one over on us, didn't you?" Jude said sarcastically. "But I got mo' brains in the itchin's of my head than you have in yo' whole damn carcass. I had the quitclaim made out like I did a-purpose. It don't say how much our money dealin's with you amounts to. You are goin' to write out a check in my name for ten thousand dollars!"

Tolliver Radd stared at him in amazement.

"An' don't be tryin' no tricks on me. I kin read figgers, an' I kin tell my name when I see it writ, even ef I can't write it myself. An' I'll know yo' name by the way it's signed on the other check."

"Don't you write nothin'," Nate piped. "Tell him to go to hell!"

"Build a fire an' stick in the poker, Kal," Jude ordered, a demoniacally shrill note in his voice. "A little hot iron at the bottom of his feet mought help some."

"I'll write," Tolliver said, with an air of resignation.

Slowly, while his persecutor bent over his shoulder, he wrote, first blocking in the $10,000 in figures, which brought a grunt of satisfaction from Jude. Slowly he wrote Jude's name. He signed the check, tore it from the book and handed it to Jude.

"That there is a big price to pay for our liberty, Jude."

"Liberty!" Jude cackled shrilly. "Bring me some of that there balin' wire, Kal, an' the pliers out the flivver."

With the wire he fastened Tolliver Radd's hands behind him, twisting the wire cruelly tight. He fastened Nate likewise.

"Ain't no danger of 'em workin' that loose," he remarked to his brothers. "Now I'll run over to Jardice an' git this money."

"What you aimin' for us to do with 'em?" Ruk asked. "I could lead 'em off down in the swamp an' kill 'em there."

"Leave the thinkin' to me, Ruk. Out there in the back yard, where we had our 'tater bed last year, we are gittin' ready to fix it again. Dig a grave there, Ruk, you an' Kal takin' turn about. Make 'em git in it an' shoot 'em there. Then fill up the grave. On top of that spread the manure an' bed the 'taters, same as usual. Ef any one was to look, they'd see only the 'taters. In the Spring, when they sprouts, we'll git our draws for plantin' same as usual. Nobody wouldn't think of lookin' fo' co'pses under a 'tater bed."

"Why not make 'em dig their own grave?" Ruk asked.

"Tolliver Radd would trick you, sho', an' git away. Keep 'em settin' right here, with one of you on guard constant with the rifle. Better tie their ankles together, too, an' tie 'em to their chairs."

Jude departed. Ruk took first turn at digging the grave. Through a window, the wooden shutter of which was thrown wide, they could watch him. He first marked off a space about eight feet by three. With a grubbing hoe he grubbed, then threw out the soft earth with a shovel. When he was down waist

deep, he laid aside his tool and came in for Kal to relieve him. At noon Kal cooked dinner; but he did not feed the prisoners. By the time it was growing dusk, Kal, in the grave, was out of sight, only the end of his shovel appearing and reappearing as he pitched out earth.

BOTH prisoners jerked up their heads as an automobile drove up and stopped at the front gate. Ruk got up and eased from the room, going out through the kitchen. There was presently a knock on the door.

"Come in," Tolliver Radd invited.

A black face appeared around the edge of the door. Mose came in, leaving the door ajar.

"Mist' Pete George came up de creek an' say he find de billy an' y'all ain' dere. I wus 'fraid somethin' happen. Been lookin' fo' you everywhar. What in de name o' heaven you settin' dere lak dat fo', Mist' Tolliver?"

"Mose," Tolliver Radd said in a low tone, "git in the car an' go git some help. These here—"

The door opened behind Mose, and Ruk stepped into the room. Swinging the rifle, he struck the negro a crashing blow over the head. Mose fell to his hands and knees. Sitting back on his heels, he pried the stiff straw hat from about his ears.

"Blessed Gawd, white folks," he complained, "you done bus' in my new Sunday hat."

"Git up an' hist yo' hands!"

White-eyed, Mose obeyed. Ruk tied Mose as the others were tied. From the window Ruk called—

"Kal, that grave is deep enough."

"What all dis heah fo'?" Mose wanted to know. "What grave you speakin' of, white folks?"

"You goin' to kill 'em here, or take 'em outside?" Kal asked.

"Who you gwine kill?" Mose demanded.

"We'll put 'em in the grave first," Ruk said. "Be better that way. Then there won't be no sign on the outside. Are you goin' to walk?" he asked the prisoners. "Or will we have to drag you?"

"We'll walk," Tolliver Radd said shortly.

He felt that if his legs were free, a chance—some chance—would develop whereby he could outmaneuver his captors.

"You gwine kill us an' bury us 'thout no fun'al nor nothin'?" Mose wailed.

Slipping from the chair, he sprawled on the floor. Loudly he began to pray. Ruk cut the cord that bound his ankles and savagely kicked him. But Mose only prayed the louder. Then he began to sing a hymn. Seizing his arms, they jerked him roughly to his feet. But his knees buckled beneath him. Dragging him, while the other two walked ahead, they deposited him on the edge of the grave.

Tolliver Radd glanced at Nate. The little man's face was twitching and jerking; but he kept his lips pressed tightly together, trying to suppress any show of emotion. The big man tensed himself. He was going to start action of some kind, even if it meant that he would be shot immediately. If these varmints thought they were going to force him to step calmly into his own grave, they had another thought coming.

"Looks like Jude would be gittin' back," Kal said nervously.

"He was goin' to wait till jest 'fo' closin' time 'fo' he cashed the check," Ruk told him. "We won't wait."

With all the power of his lungs, Mose began to cry:

"O Lawdy, Lawdy, Lawdy! O Lawdy, Lawdy, Lawdy!"

"Come on, Kal," Ruk shouted above the noise Mose was making. "We'll th'ow him in first an' git his durned mouth shet."

He reached out a hand to grasp Mose by the arm. Like that of a snapping turtle, Mose's round head shot out. His strong white teeth clamped down on the fingers of Ruk's hand. Ruk yelled and

jerked. Quickly swinging a booted foot, Tolliver Radd kicked Ruk into the grave. Mose, still hanging on, was jerked in after him. Kal, the big horse pistol gripped in his hand, stood gaping. There was a sudden rush, and Nate, head down, rammed him from behind. Kal bent backward, the pistol flying into the air, then pitched headlong into the open hole.

In a moment they heard Mose's muffled protest—

"Fo' Gawd's sake, git offen my neck!"

Ruk's head appeared above the edge. Tolliver Radd kicked at him, and he ducked from sight. When he had fallen into the hole, he had carried his rifle with him.

A minute later his head appeared on the other side. Tolliver, standing back from the edge, had to run around the end; because if he jumped over the grave, it would give Ruk a clear shot. He was just in time to kick the rifle out of Ruk's hand.

"Nate, you stay on one side, me on the other," he said. "We got to watch him close. We can't leave, kase he'd rise up an' shoot us in the back 'fo' we had gone twenty steps."

"An' when Jude gits back?"

"We'll be jest out of luck. But don't let's wade that creek till we git to it."

IT BECAME quite dark. As it grew harder for them to see Ruk when he bobbed up and tried to shoot them from the edge of the pit, the tension increased. Several times he almost succeeded.

A car drew up to the front gate. In the grave, Mose was loudly complaining that he had sand in his eyes, and that Ruk was trampling the life out of him. He stood on Mose to peep over the edge. Guided by the noise, a man came running around the side of the house. Tolliver Radd turned and waited. Nate quickly drew back into the shadows.

As the man reached the edge of the grave and tried to peer into the darkness, whence all the sound was coming, Nate rushed. Again using his head as a battering ram, he knocked the man over into the pit. The earth at the side caved in, and Nate slid in after him.

"Hell, Nate," Tolliver Radd yelled in consternation, "that there was the sheriff you butted."

Pandemonium had now broken loose in the bottom of the grave. Oaths, yells, groans and the sound of blows were mingled. Radd looked around in time to see a shadowy figure, rifle in hand, leaping toward him. Evidently getting a foothold on the struggling mass, Ruk had succeeded in scrambling out.

Before Tolliver could move from his tracks, Ruk thrust the muzzle of the rifle into the pit of his stomach. There was a muffled report. Though he felt no pain, Tolliver Radd knew that he was mortally wounded. He wondered how long it took a man, shot through the stomach, to die. Well, he'd give some sort of accounting before that time came.

With the muzzle of the rifle still against his body, he rushed the other man. The mechanism of the rifle clicked and a second bullet followed the first. But Tolliver Radd kept on. Ruk fell down, and Tolliver placed a heavy foot on his neck. Walt Pitts, a grizzled deputy, ran up with a flashlight and snapped a pair of handcuffs about Ruk's wrists.

With a heavy pocketknife, Walt cut the wire that bound Tolliver's arms together. In numb hands, attached to arms that felt paralyzed, Tolliver took the flashlight from Walt and went to the edge of the grave.

Buck Ridgely, the sheriff, had scrambled out. In one corner, Mose was calling lustily—

"Mist' Tolliver; Mist' Tolliver, fo' heaven's sake come git yo' nigger out dis heah pit of darkness!"

On his back, Kal lay crying out in anguish. Draped partly across his body, little Nate Dingby lay face down. With a moan, Tolliver Radd leaped into the grave.

"Have they got you, too, old pardner?" he asked, kneeling beside Nate. "Did one of 'em knife you?"

Catching Nate by the shoulder, he tried to turn him over. Kal's head followed the upward movement of the little man's body. His cries of anguish grew louder. Nate turned his head and spat.

"Ef they was mo' than two of my teeth would meet, Tolliver, I'd have chawed his durned ear off. Who is that they kilt?"

"It's me, Nate. Shot twice, through the belly. I'm goin' fast. 'Most paralyzed already. Ain't got hardly no use of myself from my hands up. But let's git out of here. I don't want to 'commodate these varmints by dyin' in this here damn grave. Come on, Mose. Feel yo' way out. They's a message I want you to take to Sary."

He boosted Nate up ahead of him, then scrambled out of the hole.

"Walt," he called to the deputy, "take this here flashlight an' see ef them bullets went clean through me."

Nate, his hands still fastened behind him, fearfully bent close as the light played over Tolliver's big body.

"Hell, Tolliver," he exclaimed, "they ain't no holes behind, ner in front, neither."

Tolliver Radd felt his body. He took the flashlight and examined Ruk's rifle.

"Here's the reason I ain't shot, Nate. This here rifle barrel is rammed up tight, full of clay."

"Tolliver," Nate said judicially, when his hands had been released and they had washed the dirt from Mose's eyes, "like I've said befo', it do seem you stretches the blanket sometimes in gittin' young fellers lined up in business with you. In kickin' these here polecats loose from around Gray's neck, you most got 'em strung round ourn. Buck—" turning to the sheriff—"how'd you know we was in sich a hell of a fix?"

"Why, I got Tolliver's message," the sheriff said in surprise.

"I didn't tell you, Nate," Tolliver Radd said, "because I didn't know whether he'd git it in time to do any good; but I sont Buck a message."

"How'd you send Buck a message? Who'd you send it by?"

"Jude."

"Jude!"

"In the check, instead of writin' out them ten thousand dollars, I writ: 'Arrest this man. Send help.' I knowed Jo Tyson would act prompt. Jo's keen. All these young fellers I got lined up with me are keen. That's the reason, once I pick one out, I never rest till I git him on my side."

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of *Adventure* published monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1933. State of New York, county of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared FRED LEWIS, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Treasurer and General Manager of THE BUTTERICK COMPANY, publisher of *Adventure*, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August, 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, THE BUTTERICK COMPANY, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City. Editor, A. A. PROCTOR, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City. Managing Editor, VICTOR WEYBRIGHT, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City. Business Managers, None. 2. That the owner is: THE BUTTERICK COMPANY, a corporation, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City, whose stockholders are: J. S. BACHE & Co., 42 Broadway, New York City, JOHN P. BOYLE, c/o MOORE & SCHLEY, 100 Broadway, New York City, EFFIE PHELPS HOOVER, RAY PHELPS HOOVER and HOWARD EARL HOOVER, executors of the estate of FRANK K. HOOVER, dec'd, c/o Trust No. 14004, First Union Trust and Savings Bank, Dearborn and Monroe Sts., Chicago, Illinois, STANLEY R. LATSHAW, Butterick Building, 161 Sixth Ave., New York City, MERRICK & Co., c/o Customers Securities Dept., THE NEW YORK TRUST CO., 100 Broadway, New York City., MOORE & SCHLEY, 100 Broadway, New York City, Jos. A. MOORE, 300 Park Avenue, New York City, SAMUEL SCHWARTZ, 18 Renner Ave., Newark, N. J., SHEARSON, HAMMILL & Co., 71 Broadway, New York City, WEBB WALKER, Medical Arts Bldg., Fort Worth, Texas, WARWICK CORP., Room 2204-8 So. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill., C. E. WELLES & & Co., 39 Broadway, New York City. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are (If there are none, so state.): THE BOWERY SAVINGS BANK, 110 East 42nd Street, New York City (Holder of mortgage on real property). 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. FRED LEWIS, Treasurer and General Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 21st day of September 1933. CHAPPELL CORY, JR. Notary Public, New York County Clerk's No. 206, Reg. No. 4-C-139. (My commission expires Mar. 30, 1934. *Seal* —Form 3526.—

Juryman

By FRANK DUFRESNE

A JURY trial, the first in five years, was in progress at the little village of Frozenfoot, Alaska.

Old Judge Crowley peered over his steel-bowed spectacles at the score of assembled prospectors, trappers and fur traders crowded into the small log cabin which served as his courthouse as well as home. His sharp gray eyes came to rest on Paddy Sheehan, last of the jurors to be examined upon this notable occasion.

"Paddy Sheehan," he said without preamble, "do you know of any good reason why you could not render a fair decision in the case of the United States of America versus a native Indian: to wit, one Lop Ear Wolf?"

Paddy, who had drifted in the wake of stampeders in Alaska until his once famous shock of red hair had become but a pinkish fringe surrounding a shiny dome, pulled off his matted martenskin cap and rose awkwardly to his feet. He was nursing a grouch as a result of an all-night pan game with three of his sourdough cronies, during which time he had supplied frequent libations of white "likker" to the party, but he had genuine respect for the caustic old judge.

"It ain't my notion o' justice to be unduly har-rd on the poor untootered savage," he answered with what dignity he could summon, "but I'll do me best."

"Passed for cause," pronounced the judge dryly. "Take a seat over there with the other boys, an' we'll proceed with the case."

He tapped the butt of a dog whip on the spruce table behind which he was sitting.

"Deputy Marshal Stack, take the stand. Now tell the court an' jury what you know about this fracas."

Deputy Stack, a comparatively young man amid this group of grizzled old-timers, stood up and looked around the room. Except for the stool he had just vacated there was not an empty seat in the cabin.

"What stand shall I take?" he asked.

"Sit where you are!" snapped the judge, nettled. "Tell your story an' git it over with."

"Well," began the deputy, somewhat taken aback by this display of acidity on the part of old Judge Crowley, "last night I was awakened by a series of blood-curdling yells outside my door. Sounded like murder was being done. I dressed as quickly as I could, belted on my gun and stepped out. To make the story short, I found this defendant, Lop Ear, and two other Indians in an intoxicated condition, so I threw them in jail. That's about all there is to it, except this

morning the other two fellows pleaded guilty, as your Honor knows, while Lop Ear demanded a trial by jury."

There being but one witness for the prosecution, the defendant was sworn in and allowed to testify in his own behalf. The Indian's story was eloquently brief.

"No guilty," he stated.

Judge Crowley's dog whip thumped the table.

"Wait a minute, Lop Ear. Let's git this straight. You understand that Deputy Marshal Stack charges you with being intoxicated. What about it?"

Lop Ear's smoke-wrinkled face registered defiance.

"No talk skated."

"Maybe the poor divil don't know what that big wor-rd means," suggested Paddy Sheehan, who had a bright, speculative eye fastened on the Indian.

"Maybe not," agreed the judge. He turned to the prisoner. "Intoxicated means drunk. Were you drunk?"

"No drunk."

"What were you yelling about?" put in Deputy Stack.

"Feel good. Sing. No drunk."

Judge Crowley took up the questioning.

"Did you have anything to drink?"

"Ketchum this many drinks." Lop Ear held up three fingers. "Trade one martenskin for one bottle hootch."

"Who'd you trade with?"

Lop Ear Wolf's rheumy eyes ranged blankly along the line of jurors.

"No speak."

"Of course you wouldn't answer that one," observed the judge pungently. "One more question: Were the other two fellows, Whole Cheese and Hatchet Head, drunk?"

"I dunno. Me no drunk."

THE jurymen were retired by the simple expedient of every one else clearing out of the cabin and leaving them to their deliberations.

Jake Wheeler, who had put in a session on a petit jury at Fairbanks, was elected foreman. He proceeded without delay to give his fellow members the benefit of his legal experience.

"As fur as I can see this ain't no case," he said weightily. "Just one man's word agin another's. All you can do is turn the Injun loose."

He tore a sheet of paper into twelve ragged squares and passed them around.

"Write 'Not Guilty' on 'em and turn 'em in," he ordered.

When the slips came in one of them bore the single word: "Gilty".

"Who wrote that?" demanded Jake.

"I did," said Paddy Sheehan. "The rascal is guilty."

"How do you know he's guilty?"

Said Paddy:

"I have me reasons. Here's wan of thim: If you'll remimber whin the Judge asked Lop Ear if the other two natives was drunk he said he didn't know. Now, mind ye, they'd already pladed guilty, so if he didn't know they was drunk he must have been drunk himself."

Several of the jurors rubbed their whiskers thoughtfully at Paddy's logic, but it only made Jake Wheeler angrier.

"Ye're crazy, Paddy! What difference does it make whether the other two Injuns was drunk or sober. It's one man's word agin another's, like I told you. We'll take another ballot."

Again one lone ballot bore the single word: "Gilty".

Jake Wheeler turned on Paddy like a wild bull.

"Ye thick-headed Irisher! Didn't I tell ye them other two don't count?"

Paddy sat stiffly in his chair.

"I'll not turn him loose. He was drunk as a lor-rd, an' a lyin' rascal to boot. It's me that knows it." There was a defiant, almost prideful gleam in his eyes. "The man don't live who could drink three drinks of the likker them Injuns had and not be drunk."

In the silence that followed Paddy rose to his full height and faced his eleven associates.

"Gintlemen of the jury," he said proudly, "I made that likker."

By the Author of "These Men Flew"

WHEELS

By ANDREW A. CAFFREY

A RAP of knuckles sounded on Colonel Prince's office door. Without glancing up from his work at hand, the commandant of Orr Field bade the rapper enter. Sergeant Souvenir Staples came in, closed the door behind him and addressed his superior officer in a manner entirely unmilitary.

"Colonel," he said, "absolutely nobody gave the sergeant permission to talk with the Colonel."

The colonel quit pushing his pen for a shake, looked up to grin at the old soldier, standing there in the bright Florida sunshine, and said:

"Sit, soldier. Have a smoke. What the devil's troubling you, Sergeant? But just a moment—make it snappy. This, you know, is my big day. I make my weekly crusade westward to Cypress Springs today to take on Web Field's commander and adjutant in a bit of golf. She's going to be a war, Sergeant. Captain Hall, or Lieutenant Foster, and I are going to take on Major Dodson and Captain Merritt for the all-Air Service championship of these two fields—and may the best two Orr Field men win. Last week Captain Hall and I put them down in fine style. So make it snappy. What's troubling you now?"

Acting on invitation, Souvenir had touched off one of the colonel's best Turkish cigarets.

He said:

"It won't take me longer than two or three of these swell cigs to tell you, Colonel. It's about this visiting major—Major Pratt. Just where does he stand?"

Colonel Prince, still busy with his desk work, scratched on as before. Fully thirty seconds passed into time before he uttered the word—

"Pratt!"

Then after a few more seconds:

"Why the devil, Sergeant, must you come into my sanctum sanctorum and gloom up this fine morning with a question about Pratt? Listen—" and the C.O's voice was low, confidential and strictly unmilitary—"you're an old soldier; and you know as well as I that this man Pratt doesn't fit. He's the square peg. We, poor devils, must hold what's dumped on us.

"Pratt—and this must slip in one ear and out the other, Sergeant—is some sort of a problem that the War College can't solve. Artillery transferred him to Air Service, with compliments. Air Service has been shuffling the major ever since. I think he's considered the most traveled officer in the Service, Sergeant. Does that answer your question?"

"No, sir, it doesn't," old Souvenir Staples answered. "What you've just related, I've known right along. But what I want to know is, must we take it from Major Pratt? And I've got to know, for the gentleman has been raising particular hell with one of my boys—Corporal Cole. And Corporal Cole is my good right hand."

Souvenir laughed, then continued:

"Several times during the past few weeks Major Pratt has had trouble with headquarters hangar ships. Each time, if I do say it, the fault has been with the major. On one occasion the major tried to climb a cold motor too steeply. It did a konk on him and almost crashed. He managed to get the nose down, level off and drop her over the fence for a safe set-down. He came back to the hangar with fire in his eye and lit into Corporal Cole for putting such a ship on the line.

"The corporal tried to tell the major that any cold Hisso would let him down if he tried to climb.

"The major stood young Cole up and gave him both barrels—told him that he'd request advice from an enlisted man when he desired such advice. And that line of talk, Colonel, is something new on an air post. Well, so much for that.

"But two days ago Major Pratt was flying another of our headquarters hangar ships. Corporal Cole and myself, standing out on the deadline, were watching a ship spinning 'way off toward Web Field. It was a long spin, starting up at about eight or nine thousand feet. And all the way down in that spin, the pilot didn't goose his motor once. Corporal Cole remarked to me then that the pilot was all wet.

" 'He must think that old Lady Luck will furnish all the flying brains,' Cole said. 'Look at that. A two-thousand-foot spin, if it's an inch, and the bird hasn't burnt that motor out once. Boy! Will she be fogged up?'

"Well, Colonel, we watched that ship kick out of its spin, lift its nose and redress. But, hell! It grunted out a few smoky shots, trailed long ribbons of London fog from its exhaust stacks and quit cold. Sure enough, Cole was right; and that pilot had a ship with a dead motor on its snout. But he still had lots of altitude, so he made the field on a glide. And who was it but Major Pratt, and in one of our best ships—No. 313?

"Needless to say, the major climbed astride Corporal Cole as soon as the corporal got out on the field to give the prop a turn. And the corporal simply told the major that the major should have goosed the throttle, every now and then, during the long spin. Cole was right.

" 'Mechanic,' Major Pratt said, 'when I decide to take a flying lesson from an enlisted expert, I'll whistle for you. Now, twist this damned propeller and do the work expected of you. I'll report this.' "

"And he did, Sergeant," Colonel Prince said. "To me in person. But you, Sergeant, heard no more of it. Now, look here: If I, or any of the regular officers of the post, do anything to foul motors or harm flying equipment, you and your mechanics tell us; and we'll take it. That's why you're in the hangars. As for this Pratt—can't you let him ride for awhile, Sergeant? You

know, just grin and bear it.

"I'll guarantee that no mechanic suffers because of advice given in line of duty. Of course, we want no outward signs of hostility or insubordination, and absolutely no disrespect. But the future will iron out these wrinkles in the otherwise smooth fabric of Orr Field life. Let's not be too hasty, Sergeant.

"By the way, you'll have a ship on the line for me just after noon, eh? How about No. 234? That's a sweet-flying craft, Sergeant."

" 'Course it is, Colonel. It's one of Corporal Cole's pets," Souvenir said. "It will be on the line, all set for you."

NEXT morning Orr Field was under a tumbling mass of sun-shot clouds. The advance class, as usual, had gone out to the R.M.A. stage first thing after breakfast. The R.M.A. stage was an open barren some four miles east of Orr. Out there, away from the field's activities, the more particular work of advanced training took place.

But flying at the R.M.A. stage had been called off for the time being, due to the fact that Web Field, some fourteen miles west of that spot, had chosen this morning of clouds as ideal cross-country weather. As a rule, down in that great, flat country, a student, at four or five thousand feet, can see all three stops of a forty-five-mile-per-leg triangle course; but with clouds so near to the ground, the stunt became closer to what the book called for. So either field, with a cross-country class on hand, usually pounced on such a morning.

Meanwhile, with the ships of Web's cross-country group plowing the cloudy sky, the Orr men must remain on the ground. That was no drawback, though, for there were rattlesnakes to be shagged, and even young alligators to be hunted in the lagoons not so far east of the R.M.A. stage. So it followed that, of all the R.M.A. group, only Sergeant Anderson was with the seven ships out there on the barren, when a motorbike, snapping and barking its way along the twisting dirt road, brought out Major Pratt. Anderson was in charge of the ships while they were assigned to that duty.

Major Pratt unloaded from the sidecar of the motorbike. He strolled over to ship 313, adjusting helmet and goggles. Sergeant Anderson, flat on his back under one of the wide wings, gave the major little or no attention.

"A little service, soldier!" Major Pratt snapped. "Is this ship ready to fly?"

"Yes, sir," Anderson answered, sitting up, "it is; but all training has been washed out till these clouds blow away."

"I'll fly now," said the major. "Give me a start."

"Orders are against it, sir," said Anderson. "You see, the Web Field cross-country students are on the air. Their cross-country course, the triangle route, frames this territory. When they're on, in clouds, we stay off; and—"

"And I'll fly now!" Pratt stated. "I didn't ask you for any semi-official advice or opinions. Start this motor—now!"

There's a limit to a noncom's opposition, even if he is entirely right; and Anderson had reached that limit. With the officer in charge of the stage missing, Anderson could only state the facts, then take orders, as given. He did that; and Major Pratt took the air. And the clouds took Major Pratt. He followed the highway west toward Cypress Springs. Web Field went under him, and he carried on. But off toward the Gulf there was rain, and the clouds packed lower and even heavier.

A wiser flyer might have turned back, or at least stuck to the guiding ribbon of concrete which was that east-to-west Cypress Springs highway. Pratt did neither. Instead, he went afield, jazzing off to the south.

In no time at all Major Pratt was lost. An hour of utter panic came to the major. It was an hour during which he must have lived a million years and flown a million miles. Then, perhaps

due to that thing which sends a lost man around in circles, Major Pratt once more sighted the highway—some highway—under his ghosting plane. He had no way of knowing, but luck was with him; and it was the right highway. The clouds were as heavy as before. Pratt decided that he'd quit that highway only for a safe landing.

But all sense of direction was gone; and no longer were the clouds sun-shot. He had no way of knowing east or west. So, after much weaving back and forth along the strip of concrete, with gas running low, he decided to make a choice. His choice was wrong, and the direction chosen was carrying him west, toward Cypress Springs.

But the major's mistake of direction was no excuse for his second mistake: He was flying the left side of the highway. A flyer in bad visibility, following a road or track or river, should keep to the right, for that's the law of the air. Perhaps Pratt, just freed from that limbo of the lost, was still rattled. Be that as it may, Pratt zoomed just as a second ship, flying east on the proper side of the road, bored its way into view.

In that quick zoom some part of Pratt's landing gear made contact with the propeller of the eastbound plane. That lower pilot, watching his highway, saw the thing that shot up before him, heard his tipped prop whistle shrilly, slap the air for a wild second, then vibrate with that ship-destroying power that comes to a broken propeller. He cut his switch, dropped his nose and made a quick try for a small clearing in the cypress.

There were drainage clearings at either side of the highway that would take a landing plane; but some four hundred yards separated the powerless ship from those long lanes. So into the few acres' opening the plane dropped. It bounced, ground-looped, then came to a tail-up stop when a stump, a bit larger than the other snags, got in the way.

Major Pratt, circling, made sure there were no cars within sight on the highway. Then he came back, still at a low altitude, and flew in *verage* above the wrecked craft that had been eastbound. Pratt saw no sign of life there. After a few more minutes of observation, he went back to the road and landed in the drainage clearing.

BACK at Orr, a few hours later, Souvenir quit his souvenir-making to watch a plane that was landing with a dead stick. The ship was No. 313. Souvenir yelled for Corporal Cole. Cole and his crewmen went out on the flying field to start that dead propeller.

"Our ex-artillery friend—Pratt," Cole soon reported. "He wouldn't talk. Just said, 'Pull this motor.'"

"Says he!" said Souvenir. "Corporal, when there's a motor to be pulled, I'll do the telling. What did the ex-artillery gentleman say is wrong with the ship?"

"Just as I tell it, Sarge. He wouldn't talk it over with me. Just said, 'Pull this motor'," Cole repeated. "But I'll tell you. It's out of gas. Both tanks dry, main and reserve."

Souvenir's expression clouded. Bad, this thing of having a ship run out of fuel in flight. They court-martial men and break noncoms for that. It's a major offence in aviation.

Souvenir was doing some heavy thinking. Pull the motor, and cover up? Perhaps it wasn't a bad idea. By pulling the motor, aviation means removing the power unit from the ship. But you don't pull a motor unless the motor has gone wrong, or unless it has many flying hours booked against it. As for No. 313's engine, it had been in service only a few days. So Souvenir had a problem on his hands.

Perhaps Major Pratt was doing somebody a great favor, which, as Souvenir knew, wasn't the way of Pratt. On the other hand, it might be the major's fault, with the buck being passed to the crew. That being the case, it would be up to Souvenir to see to it that his hangar be kept in the clear.

Pratt had just returned from Artillery to Air Service again. So the men of this new branch looked upon him as a visiting officer. They—these officers of infantry, artillery and cavalry—were in the habit of transferring over from their old branch to air. In coming, these men brought their accrued seniority, plus old-branch caste, plus an open disdain for the newer branch.

Because of seniority, the incoming officers must be placed in command of this and that; hence more or less friction, owing to the fact that free-and-easy Air Service has never known much of the straight-laced discipline of old-branch routine. And, in turn, the visiting officers don't gravitate easily to the level of never-saluting greaseballs and borrowed-time pilots.

"How long has 313 been away from the hangar?" asked the old one.

"She's been over the fence all morning," Corporal Cole told Souvenir. "And it's 2:10 now."

"I'll telephone over the fence and see what Anderson has to say about it," Souvenir decided, starting for his hangar office. He added, "Anyway, we're in the clear. Don't put any gas in her till I give you the word. See that everything else is jake with her."

Souvenir telephoned over the fence, getting Anderson on the wire.

"What do you want, Souvenir—a wreck?" Anderson asked.

This badinage was because Orr Field claimed that Souvenir's only interest in ships lay in their salvage value. That is, their wrecked value for souvenir-making purposes.

"Nearly got me a wreck; and it's one of yours, Swede," the souvenir-maker said, by way of tossing a bit of a scare into Anderson.

"How do you mean, feller?" Anderson barked back over the four miles of wire. "Who d'yer think y' kiddin'?"

"Listen, Swede, is there anybody right close to your elbow, where they can hear what I'm saying?"

"I'm alone. Shoot," Sergeant Anderson told Souvenir.

"Well, Ship 313 slid into the field with a dead stick and dry tanks. Both tanks, main and reserve, were dry. That's bad. So bad that you'd best pack up your bag and start over the hill, unless you have a good quick answer. Is it your crew's fault?"

"Me—go over the hill! Why, you monkey man, you! Asking a guy like me if he's at fault. Unheard of! I should report you to the hospital and have Major Watt see what's wrong with your head. That major took 313 away from here early this morning. In other words, he's flown her for more than four hours on a two-hour tank. Smart, eh?"

"Too damned smart. See you later, Swede."

And Souvenir hung up.

SOUVENIR joined Corporal Cole out where No. 313 rested midway between the deadline and an out-of-commission spot in the hangar.

"Fill her tanks, Corporal," he ordered. "Give the motor a good run. Look the ship over from end to end. Then spot her on the line as being ready for flight. You're in the clear. She's been away from the R.M.A. stage for all of four hours."

A few minutes later Orr Field's engineering officer and Field Inspector Blackie Melanda strolled past.

"Hey you, Blackie," Souvenir called, "I want you to take a look at No. 313's motor."

"Why should I?" Blackie backfired. "The lieutenant and myself are a couple of gents just out for an evening stroll. Think we work?"

Souvenir, thus stopping the gentlemanly evening strollers, simply explained that a flyer had made an unofficial report on No. 313. The crewmen could find no fault with the engine. Therefore, with the apt passing of ye Army buck, it was now up to the inspector.

Blackie gave the engine a run. He snooped over it and under it. He

checked the ignition and even tickled the carbureters a bit. Then he killed the motor the better to inspect each and every nut, wire, control and water connection. If that motor wasn't jake—Blackie cussed—then he'd eat it.

"But," said Blackie, "here is something that's wrong. Looka here, Souvenir. You too, Cole. See this wheelcap's bolt and nut? The bolt's in upside down. Awful!"

Corporal Cole pushed two or three men aside, taking a close look at the indicated bolt. The bolt was a small one which held the left wheel's hub cap. As Blackie had pointed out, the bolt was put in upside down. Cole said:

"It's no kidding matter, Blackie. Now, look here. All of you men, including the lieutenant, know that I should know how a bolt should be put on a plane—any bolt on a plane. What's more, the sergeant here can tell you that I have never been called for anything in the line of haywire plane work. Am I right, Sergeant?"

Souvenir agreed that Corporal Cole was right, that Cole knew planes. So Cole, bitter as the very devil, went on to say:

"This is no joke for me, or my crewmen, Blackie. I'm not trying to cover up. I'm not trying to say that we can't pull boners now and then. But I am telling you—as sure as the Lord's my judge!—that I inspected this ship before it went over the fence this morning. And when it left this hangar, that bolt was in right—head up, nut down.

"I'm sure of that; for, while Private Peel was pumping air into that right tire, I put a new cotter-pin through the nut of this left bolt. But now, you can see, there's no cotter-pin at all.

"Listen, Blackie. You too, Lieutenant. If you men can find a single bolt upside down on any one of my three ships in this hangar, I'll report for kitchen police tomorrow and work there for the rest of my stay in this man's Army. As for finding a single nut without a cotter-pin, well, I'll eat the nut that you find. That's all I've got to say."

"Aw, hell," the engineering officer said. "Forget it and cool off. You're making a mountain out of a divot, Corporal. I'll take your word for it that something happened after the ship quit the line."

"Perhaps," Souvenir said, "she blew a tire, over the fence. Maybe Anderson's gang pulled the old wheel and put this one on. But it's nothing. As the lieutenant says, you're just making a mountain out of nothing . . . Go ahead, Blackie—stroll. But say, Lieutenant, how about setting aside a few good wrecks for me? I'm running out of material."

The engineering officer laughed and said:

"The next washout we get, Sergeant, you can have first cuts. That's a promise; so you remind me, if the crash happens away from the field. I'll take you to it. And, by the way—how about making a few ash trays for me?"

HARDLY fifteen minutes had passed and Cole and his crewmen were still servicing No. 313, when the ex-artillery major strolled out to that plane resting on the deadline. It was nose out to the flying field, which meant that it was in commission to fly. The major, obviously looking for and expecting trouble, demanded—

"What's this ship doing on the line?"

"Why," Corporal Cole answered, "she's here because she's in commission, Major."

"I told you to pull her motor," the major said.

"I take my orders from the sergeant in charge of the hangar, sir," Cole answered. "Guess you'll have to tell him about it."

The major started in on the quick burning of an enlisted man who'd answer thus. Then he thought better of it, rubbed his bristling chin and swung on his heel. He went into the hangar.

Souvenir must have heard some part

of what had been said out there on the deadline, for he bent industriously to his vise. Being at work, and entirely within his rights, Souvenir didn't even stop that work when the major barked—

"You in charge of this hangar, Staples?"

"Yes, sir," Souvenir answered, still without quitting.

"Do you ever salute an officer when addressed?"

"Not while working, sir. It's a rule of this branch."

The major didn't know for sure whether it was or not. However, he backed down far enough to suggest:

"Maybe you could knock off long enough to answer a few questions. You seem to have all the answers."

Souvenir had been roughing out a piece of brass stock with a big bastard file. Now, getting a bit sore, he tossed that tool aside and faced the major, at a stance that suggested fight more than it bespoke military attention.

"What's this Ship 313 doing on the line?"

"It's in commission for flight, sir," Souvenir answered.

"I told your man to pull its motor, when it let me down for a dead-stick landing not an hour ago," the major reminded Souvenir.

"Yes, sir. That's correct. But we can't find anything wrong with its motor. What's more, the engineering officer and chief field inspector gave it an O.K. You were out of gas, you know."

"Out of gas?" the major barked, seeming to be surprised and entirely outraged. "That, as I understand this branch, is a serious offence. By hell, that's criminal. I'll—yes, I'll—no, I'll still give you a chance to cover up. Pull that motor. Say I told you to; and I'll not report that you sent me aloft without sufficient gasoline."

"We didn't," Souvenir shot back. "You had that ship away from the R.M.A. stage for more than four hours. We're in the clear, sir; and the ship's back on the line. That's the way she stands."

The major seemed nonplused. Slowly and thoughtfully, he took a cigaret from his pack, rolled it, unlighted, from one side of his mouth to the other, then said:

"You're taking in a hell of a lot of territory for an enlisted man, Sergeant. Don't you guess that you'd best fall in at my left, one pace rear, and walk where I walk—get along with me?"

Souvenir was too old in Service for that; and he didn't scare worth a damn. He said:

"Where you were for more than four hours is none of my business. If you're bushwhacking these small towns, on the make for whatever you might scare up—well, that's your affair. The cadets do that too. But when you try to slip my men the wrong end of the stick, that's where I figure in. A dead-stick landing, out of gas, is bad, next to murder; and no man, major or cadet, is going to hang that on the record of this hangar."

"You're addressing your superior officer, Sergeant," the major reminded Souvenir. He paused, coolly, by way of letting that sink in, then added, "You're an old soldier. You know that changes of command come very frequently. Colonel Prince, for instance, might decide on a trip, take over another command, or move out for any one of a half a dozen reasons. Through seniority, I happen to be next in line. One of these days, Sergeant, you might find me in command here. Then what?"

"I can get along under any commander, sir," Souvenir said.

"But," the major advanced, in a more or less petty manner, "you might have to give up your souvenir work. You might be called upon to labor. Perhaps you'd find yourself in charge of maintenance, or running the garbage gang. Or, as of old, inside looking out, eh?"

"I've done it all before; and I can do it again," said the tough old bird called Souvenir. "But while I'm in this hangar, with Colonel Prince commanding, the goose hangs high. Let 'er ride!"

The major was stopped once more. But he was a triple-threat man. His first threat had been that of just plain rank; and it had failed. His second threat, just voiced, had proven a dud. Now, getting personal, he tried the third. It was soldier talk too. He said:

"Now, look here, you old so-and-so. I'll take you apart in person if you don't pipe down and suck air. I've given you a white man's chance to play ball. One yip out of you, and—"

"I'm not so old," Souvenir cut in. "And any time you want to take off your blouse, we'll step off the reservation."

And that, too, was soldier talk. The major huffed and quit the hangar. Souvenir retrieved his big file.

It was getting pretty close to quitting time. All flying was washed out at 4:30, although a good fours hours of daylight yet remained. Corporal Cole and his men were pushing 313 into the hangar as Major Pratt, going out, dodged to avoid the wide swing of the wing-tip.

"Watch what you're doing, you men!" he snapped. "Awkward asses!"

"Sergeant, ya hard old devil, you sure sent that swell major down the road talking to himself," Corporal Cole remarked. "Say, do you reckon he's as bad as he sounds? Did you hear him call us, eh?"

"I heard him," Souvenir said, "and he'd better be good if he ever meets me off the reservation when I'm feeling just so. That guy threatened to take me apart, Corporal. You know, I've never before in my useless life seen such a stink made over nothing at all. Surer'n the devil, there's been some mountains made here today.

"What if the guy did stay away for four hours? He's a major, isn't he? There'd be nothing said. But the loud, dumb egg must go to work and shoot off his trap and try to hang the blame on us. He'll play hell, trying to get away with that. Tell you what, a bird like that is just asking for it. And them as do the loud asking—gets.

"By the way, Corporal, did Colonel Prince get back yet?"

"Just my luck," Corporal Cole reported. "He's not back, and I was counting on running into town this evening."

"Well, what's stopping you, soldier?" Souvenir barked. "Hop to it. I'll stick around till the colonel gets back. I want to see the C.O, anyway. I want to get the jump on this loud major. He threatened me, an enlisted stiff, with bodily harm. That's a serious offence, Corporal. Damned serious. I want to warn Colonel Prince that I won't be responsible for anything that might happen to that major if he happens to meet me in town one of these nights."

ALL along the line, throughout the length of the twelve-hangar frontage, ships were landing and taxiing in to call it a day. Souvenir's three crews were trundling the hangar's ten planes in, one after the other. Corporal Cole, with his men, had the second of their ships just inside the wide doors when a motorcycle, with sidecar, whirled up to the hangar.

The coming of that piece of equipment spelled business or disaster. Souvenir looked up from his workbench and again tossed his big file to one side. Then he went out to see what had brought the engineering officer back in such a rush and with such a cloudy face.

"I've got a wreck for you, Sergeant," the officer said. "It's 234. Your ship—the commanding officer's."

"Bad?" Souvenir asked, and the asking seemed packed with fear.

"Dead," the engineering officer answered.

He led Souvenir out on the gravel apron, produced the cigarets, and they both lighted up.

"It's about thirty miles west of here, in that cypress thicket. Captain Hall and Bill Foster found it. They, you know, were over at Cypress Springs with the colonel. They had a bit of motor trouble and didn't get away on

the return trip with the C.O. They say he left the Springs at about eleven. They didn't take off till three.

"It was a freak crash; and it sounds bad for the hangar. Hall and Foster landed and looked the mess over. They say that the propeller must have gone to pieces in flight. It was raining down that way, about noon, and the colonel must have been flying pretty low, hedge-hopping. So, when the prop went, he had to take the first landing he could see. He went into that cypress. His landing wasn't so bad; but she flopped over on her back, and the burnt-off stump of an old cypress came into the pit. It killed the skipper.

"How about 234's propeller, Sergeant?" the engineering officer asked.

"Just a minute," Souvenir answered.

Then he yelled for Cole.

"More trouble, Corporal," he said, when Cole appeared. "Your ship, 234, went down in that cypress grove, thirty miles west of here; and Colonel Prince is dead. They think the propeller flew apart. How about it?"

"Oh, my Lord, Sergeant—Prince gone?" Corporal Cole muttered. "Him—in one of my ships? That's enough; I'm—"

"Keep your shirt on! Keep your shirt on!" Souvenir growled. "One thing at a time, Cole. You're not on the pan yet. Now, how about that prop?"

"It was a brand new stick," Corporal Cole told them. "I drew it from supply, myself, day before yesterday. And yesterday, before Colonel Prince took 234, Lieutenant Foster flew it for two hours. He said the prop, motor and ship were all jake. I asked him for a report."

"That's good," Souvenir told Cole. Then he added, "But you won't be able to go to town. Take your crew, get a field service truck from the garage and start west. You know where that cypress grove is, eh?"

Cole said that he knew, then started for the garage.

"Well, Lieutenant," Souvenir suggested, "you said that you'd hop me out to the next wreck. Will we get going? This slows me up."

The engineering officer thought it was a good idea; so a plane was put on the line, started, and the two took off for the west. Other ships were going that way, now that word of the accident had gone through the command. The ambulance was on the highway. Two other official cars and a motorbike were trailing the ambulance.

Cole and his field service truck passed through the main gate just as Souvenir and the engineering officer cleared the west fence. Thirty miles, through open country, isn't far for such equipment; and in a very short time the scene of the wreck bristled with activity.

Flanking the highway, through the grove, there were those clear spaces at either side of the right of way. A plane under control would find no difficulty picking a landing in those cleared lanes. And the wreck, spitted upon the stump that had killed Colonel Prince, was back from the road only a short distance—perhaps four hundred yards. Not far, but too far for a man who was flying low, through rain and clouds. So the colonel, if he could see the clearings, had had no chance to stretch his glide into those spaces of safety.

Captain Hall and Lieutenant Foster had returned to the scene. With the crews of two other ships, they were there when Souvenir and the engineering officer landed. The body had been lifted from the wreck and placed on a motor cover, there to await the coming, and official examination, of Major Watt, the officer in charge of the post's Medical Corps unit.

The ambulance and official cars, plus Major Watt and Cole's crew, arrived. The several cars dropped from the highway, bumped across the clear space to the left of the road, then snaked their way south through the grove. In the bathtub of the motorbike rode Field Inspector Blackie Melanda. Major Watt and his assistants gave their attention to that silent man on the motor cover,

for that was their line of work. But Souvenir, the engineering officer, Cole and Blackie got together for a close inspection of the wreck, for that was their line; and, being airmen, they wanted to see as little as possible of what remained when a thing like that took another airman out of the picture.

The ship, 234, was over on its back, which is the usual position of a ship that has rolled to a stop in stump country. Its nose was bashed in. The landing-gear struts were splintered. Both lower wings had met stumps along the way; and those two panels were beyond future use—unless Souvenir Staples could do something with them in his line of work. Taking it all in all, it was as Captain Hall and Lieutenant Foster had first reported—a freak wreck. Not ugly enough to produce a killing, but it had.

Blackie stepped into the mess and put a hand on the landing gear, saying:

"Another one of your ships, Cole; and another wheelcap bolt upside down. How come?"

Corporal Cole and Souvenir crowded in closer.

"Right you are, Blackie," Cole agreed. "And, don't fail to tell, the cotter-pin is also missing. And, as on 313, it's the left wheel. No damned fooling, that's as plain as day. But here's something else—take a look at this tire."

All eyes took a look at the left tire. That tire had been gashed clear through in four places. The four cuts were so well spaced that an observer might suppose the distances had been measured. Tires are ruined but never cut like that in a crash. Only one thing on earth cuts plane parts like that—propeller blades chewing into them.

"Now," Cole asked, bitterly, "will you step up and explain how this ship reached back and bit its own tire like that; and especially with a shattered prop? Come on, Blackie. Let's have it."

But Souvenir was the one who had it. That is, in the event that anybody had to tell Corporal Cole.

"She's simple," Souvenir explained. "The C.O. came flying through the clouds, keeping to the right—south side—of the road. That's where he belonged, going east. Then somebody else, flying a plane west on the wrong side of the road, came along. That other pilot zoomed, tried to pass over the colonel's ship. What he did was to tip the C.O's prop with a wheel. And these cuts—as any damned fool can see—were made by the prop just before it shattered. Then, seeing the colonel go down, the other plane circled, took a look at the wreck, saw nobody get out, and decided that this was something that must be covered up.

"It's all as simple as hell!" Souvenir concluded. "The pilot in that plane knew that he couldn't contact another ship in flight, do all that damage and bring his own ship back home without signs of what had come off. So he landed to check up and discovered that one of his tires told the story. Then, being a wise egg, he went to this wreck, pulled this left wheel, mounted his own ruined one and called it a job.

"He was wise—but not wise to Air Corps assembly requirements, calling for 'nuts down'. And it's a mistake that's been made before. Corporal Cole, here, never puts nuts up or forgets cotter-pins. Cole's the best mac on this field."

Souvenir stopped talking and exchanged glances with both the engineering officer and Blackie. Almost in the same voice, moved by the dawning of the same knowledge, the E.O. and Blackie asked—

"Who was the student who put in the bad order complaint on 313?"

"Now you're asking questions," Souvenir answered. "That's what I want to talk with you about. Let's go into a huddle with Major Watt—he's ranking officer now—and see what we can work out."

Calling Major Watt aside from where his assistants were placing the dead man aboard the ambulance, Souvenir, the engineering officer, Cole, Blackie, Captain Hall and Foster went into a huddle.

Souvenir then told that group the name of the man who had landed No. 313 with a dead stick, after some four hours' absence from the R.M.A. stage. The case was cold.

Major Watt, fat, pretty well along in Army years, was always close to the saturation point and leaned dangerously toward apoplexy when suddenly excited or thoroughly angered. And he was plenty mad as he stood there and tried to drag on the wrong end of a lighted cigaret. Then he cussed, in a military manner, and booted a stump. He knew Pratt.

"Well, it's this way," Major Watt told the group. "The whole affair was doubtless an accident. The colonel was killed instantaneously. The delay, through failure to report the accident, can't be classed as accessory to manslaughter. All we have on this so-and-so Pratt is action unbecoming an officer, plus the attempt to conceal the actual causes of a fatal accident. At best, as I see the thing, a court-martial can only give him a bobtail; or, worse, perhaps just a return to Artillery. It's not enough. Hanging would be much too good for him."

"But, Major," Souvenir advanced, "that's hardly fair to my hangar. I could send this bird down the road. It's an old score, Major."

Old Watt was getting madder and madder. But he did say in a final outburst.

"I won't be ready to act for a couple of hours. I'll have to do some wiring for official advice. Maybe I'll be set to take the major into custody by eight or nine o'clock. Well, anyway, let's all go back to the post. Meanwhile, Sergeant Staples— Aw, hell!"

Cole and his crewmen were to remain and clean up the wreck. Souvenir took time to remind Cole that the shattered propeller must get back to camp, for props make the best souvenirs. Then all cars and ships started east. But Souvenir himself carried the prop-cut wheel.

HALF an hour later, shortly after six, Souvenir knocked on the door of the ex-artillery major's room, down in flying officers' quarters. A rough voice told him to come in. A pacing major, with his floor and table pretty well sprinkled with cigaret butts, stopped pacing to face the old soldier who crossed the threshold, prop-cut wheel in hand.

"Here's a wheel you left out at Colonel Prince's wreck," said Souvenir; and he tossed the wheel on the major's bed. "Being an old artilleryman, you know how to swap wheels. But you don't seem to know Air Corps requirements. On both ships, 313 and 234, you replaced the hub cap bolts with nuts up. That's wrong.

"Right now, Major, the officers of the post are working on your case. Seeing as how you have your blouse off, I'm about to work on you. When I get through working you over, you'll have just about time to pack, call the garage for transportation and grab the 7:15 northbound train for Jacksonville and points north or west. You'll keep going. But now, let's go."

They'll tell you that old Souvenir just about took that small room apart. One strange thing—there were flying officers in all the other rooms up and down both sides of the long corridor, but no one heard a thing. Only one man can walk out of a room wherein so much thudding, falling and heavy breathing has been done; and Souvenir was the one who walked. He staggered, weaved a bit, made the open air and saluted the engineering officer, Captain Hall and Lieutenant Foster. They happened to be standing just outside.

"Gentlemen," Souvenir said, "the sergeant wishes to report that the caissons are just about due to roll along. The visiting major has seen the error of his way—the way of putting bolts through hub caps. He's very much interested in the 7:15 northbound. Boots and Saddles has sounded, damned if it ain't! Good evening, gentlemen."

Chinese Fantastic

By JAMES W. BENNETT

MENCIUS, that great disciple of an even greater Chinese philosopher, Confucius, stated baldly that, "The most unfilial thing a man can do is to die without a son." These words became law in Cathay. If death strikes a man who has no offspring and who has made no provision to adopt one, the law appoints a son. This heir takes the defunct parent's name; he faithfully carries out the ritual of worship at those seasons when incense and spirit money are burned to hallow the memory of the dead. He performs the kowtow before the spirit table, which is still thought to house a portion of the ectoplasm of the departed.

Knowing this simple bit of Chinese law and custom, I was puzzled by the actions of my next-door neighbor in Peking, a wealthy Chinese bank compradore. He was having a *hao-besiang* —a three-day banquet and entertainment—to celebrate the adoption of a son and heir. Why, I asked myself, should he adopt a son when he already had one?

I had made the acquaintance of the young scion, a grave, rather wide eyed scrap of humanity, not more than five years old. I had often encountered him strolling with great dignity up and down our lane, airing a songbird. He would throw out his toes in a perfect imitation of the lordly walk of his father. He would open a fan with a deft flip of the wrist, in a graceful, precise gesture, imitative of his parent. I had been fascinated by him. He epitomized in his tiny person the *beau idéal* of the Chinese gentleman.

My neighbor invited me to the second day of feasting. He presented me to "his son", the newly adopted heir, a dull youth of fourteen who was plainly unaccustomed to the fine silks now draping his ponderous shoulders.

In a courtyard, clad in patched blue coolie cloth—the brass ring, indicative of a slave child, around his neck—sat the real son. He took no part in the festivities. He seemed to be elaborately ignored by his father and all the guests.

My host poured from a steaming pewter pot two cups of triple-distilled *samshu* and asked that I drink with him to the health of the new heir. As I did so, he evidently saw my gaze drawn to the child sitting so forlornly in that outer court, for he said loudly—

"That is no longer my son."

The child rose, bowed and answered clearly:

"To the sorrow of this slave, you are no longer my parent."

Then I saw a glint in the father's eyes, affectionate and merry. I saw it answered in the eyes of the boy. An understanding! A bond!

My host realized that I had caught the secret look they exchanged. He hesitated an instant and then, as if daring greatly, he whispered:

"You are a West Ocean Barbarian. You do not understand this ceremony. My son—my real son—is not strong. The Demons of Coughs and Colds seek to capture him. The dread Fox Spirits are laying snares for him. The Fox Maidens like nothing better than to steal the soul of a man's First Born. But they are most stupid, those demons. They are easily tricked. From now on, they will believe that the coolie youth I am pretending to adopt as my son is my real son. Let them attack *him* if they will! He is being generously paid to take the risk!"

Concluding a two-part story by the Author of "Red Skull"

The VALLEY of DWARFS

By ARTHUR O. FRIEL

The Story Thus Far:

OF THE four men who found themselves stranded in the forbidding Valley of Dwarfs, only one had ever glimpsed it before; and then he had not ventured to descend into it. That was Pablo Acuña, the Peruvian guide, who had led the three Americans from Iquitos and up the wild Ucallaga River. The three Americans did not altogether trust Acuña, and frequently they had quarreled with him; but, bland and debonair, he had insisted upon coming along with them, even refusing wages for his services. Now the three Americans, becoming suspicious, wondered why he seemed to smile so maliciously at their plight.

Connell, the domineering financier who had backed the expedition in the hope of being invited to join the Explorers Club, did not conceal his anger. Dr. Davidson, a very competent scientist, who was interested in discovering whether the small horses, tapirs, pigs, dogs and cats of the Valley of Dwarfs were survivals of prehistoric animals, or whether they were modern creatures stunted by the peculiar isolation of their domain, continued to expound his theories. Seward, the third American, a motion picture cameraman, felt himself to blame for the party's present predicament—stranded in the thousand-foot depths of a rock-walled canyon.

Seward had remained atop the cliff's rim while the Coquibo Indian porters had lowered Acuña, Connell and Davidson into the valley by means of a rope and windlass. He was supposed to remain there and watch the Indians while the three other men explored. But when Seward saw a sudden fire catch in the wild grass and sweep across the valley beneath him, driving the dwarfed animals toward the little lake and creek in a stampede like the procession into Noah's Ark, he had obeyed his photographer's news instinct. He had ordered the Indians to lower him, too, into the valley. And he had successfully filmed the panic of the beasts.

It had not, at the time, occurred to Seward that his act in thus leaving the fate of himself and his comrades to the whims of the Indians

working the windlass was particularly rash. But now, after the fire, as the four men beheld the loose coil of rope dangling from the windlass and pondered the origin of the mysterious fire, Seward realized that his descent into the valley had resulted in catastrophe. The Indians had deserted them.

How could they get out? Or how long could four men survive in a fire-swept valley of limited extent, where all grass and foliage had been burned to the ground? The herbivorous beasts, which might provide food for them, faced imminent starvation. The predatory wild dogs and wild cats would grow bolder and bolder.

Dr. Davidson summarized the situation:

"Those dogs and cats are a heavy-jawed lot, rapacious and savage even if rather small. Now that their natural food is diminished they will kill anything, including—"

He paused; and Seward concluded—

"Us."

"Exactly," said Davidson. "Thus far they have been wary, and not hungry. But later—"

HE SHRUGGED. The others looked down thoughtfully at their cartridge belts. Although all carried ammunition, no one was heavily loaded with it; and the reserve supply was at the top of the precipice. When those small but fierce canines should attack in force, especially at night . . .

"Oh, well, what's the odds?" grumbled Connell. "One way or another, it's all the same in the end. What I want to know now is, how'd all these dwarfs get shrunk? You started somethin' about that down yonder, Davidson, but you didn't finish."

"That," tardily responded Davidson, "is merely my theory, of course; but all indications seem corroborative. The physical indications are oversized extremities, undue thickness of bones and misproportion of frames. The mental indication is slowness of thought, or perception, or instinctive behavior—what you will—bordering on stupidity. And the cause is, in a word, inbreeding."

"Whatever that is," muttered Connell.

"Don't interrupt. You're getting a lecture now, if it's the last one in my life." The doctor grinned tightly. "Under these circumstances you can, perhaps, endure it. I'll try to make it short. Inbreeding, my dear student, is the continuous breeding of animals—or humans—originating from the same parentage. Brother mates with sister, cousin with cousin, and so on, with no introduction of new blood from outside. As generation succeeds generation the stock inevitably deteriorates. In the human race the mind degenerates, and the family finally becomes idiots. In the lower animals, which have only elementary minds, the body degenerates, and the family becomes runts."

He paused again. Connell nodded.

"I'm with you so far, Doc. Go ahead."

"Very well. This valley dropped, long ago, because of some earthquake. But not so long ago as the Indian legend says. So the age of this sunken valley is probably only a few hundred years. And the animals brought down with it were ordinary, full grown beasts. But the life of a beast is short at best; and it reproduces its kind much sooner than man. A mare, I believe, propagates at about three years of age; a dog at about one year; a cat at—well, less than that. I am speaking now of North American animals.

"Down here, near the equator, maturity probably arrives even earlier. Thus in the course of, let us say, four hundred years, there would be at least one hundred and thirty generations of horses, and four hundred generations of other beasts—all descendants of the few animals which survived the shock of the quake and drop. And thus the original blood has become so weak that the present representatives exist only by reason of their bodily shrinkage. In other words, they're dwarfs, because they had to get that way to live."

With that concise conclusion he stopped. A long silence ensued. At length Seward seriously asked—

"If they're that far gone, Doc, how do they manage to keep on producing colts, or whelps, or whatever they do produce?"

"Self-propagation is the first law of nature," promptly answered Davidson.

"'Self-preservation' is the term you always hear at home, but 'propagation' is the word. Nature intends every creature to propagate its kind. In order to do that, every creature must preserve itself, maintain its strength, try to prolong its own life and mate with the likeliest looking creature of its own species. I could lecture at considerable length on that point, too, Slim, treating it from the standpoints of biology, physiology, psychology and several other things. But I won't. In short, runts can still produce. That's why the world is full of them."

Another long moment passed, while the listeners digested his assertions. Then Connell confessed:

"Some of that's pretty deep to me, Doc. But why d'you say this pen's only four hundred years old?"

"That's a guess. I base it on the presence of the horses and the dogs. The cats and other beasts don't count; they're obviously native. But I now believe that the horses, in particular, originated from stock brought in by the Spaniards, who conquered Peru just about four hundred years ago. As for the dogs, I'm not so positive. Dogs are found in all parts of the world, and they are promiscuous breeders. These dogs here show much variation, and may have been wild types. However, it's logical to suppose their progenitors accompanied the horses."

"Mighty good lecture, Doc!" vigorously approved Connell. "And I'm bettin' you're right. Now how about some instruction on the subject of getting out o' here."

Thus he bluntly brought them back to the vital problem which all had, for the time, evaded. Heads turned and eyes wistfully regarded the rope, which still hung tantalizingly useless. Then Acuña calmly spoke.

"I feel, señores, that we are not permanently abandoned. As Indians go, these Coquibos of ours are trustworthy. It is true that all Indians are queer, and that any of them are likely to desert white men for no evident reason; some superstitious scare, some unexplainable grudge or fancied injury, known only to themselves. But the fact that our men left us some food may indicate that they mean to return. That food was badly packed and wrapped and was, I think, bundled with great haste. Something has happened; something we can only guess at now. But I believe that Uruki, at least, is faithful."

"We hope you are right," commented Davidson.

"So do I." The other smiled wryly. "Time will tell. And while we wait, I still wonder what started that fire."

His gaze moved to the unexplored end of the valley. Davidson nodded and arose.

"I also," he agreed. "And, after a much needed bath, I propose to try to learn."

"Me too." Seward arose, unbuttoning his shirt.

"No. You'll stay here and keep watch, Slim." The blue eyes rested on the gray ones. "In case the rope moves, fire a shot. We'll hear it."

"O. K."

Seward's face shone. Despite his disastrous dereliction of duty, he still was trusted.

When he joined the others in the water he moved with new vigor.

A little later, refreshed by removal of soot and sweat, three men walked away eastward. The fourth watched their receding forms with varying expressions. On Connell's broad back his gaze rested with twinkling approval. On Davidson's blocky shape it dwelt with undisguised reverence. But on the wiry figure of Acuña it remained longest, slowly contracting.

"There's something wrong about you, *hombre*," muttered Seward. "You've come clean at every turn, but yet there's something—dammit, what is it? I've been trying to focus you ever since we started, but you still don't quite register. Oh, well, I'll get you yet, when the right light breaks."

CHAPTER IX

BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON

WATCHFUL, the three investigators walked steadily up the burned valley. Hot sun beat down, hot ashes drifted up, hot sweat again soaked their half dry clothes. Doggedly persistent, they marched to the extreme eastern end of the gulf, scouted about it and returned on the other side of the creek. The wearisome journey proved futile.

Nowhere in all that long circuit could they detect signs of arson, combustion, or of any definite cause for the fire. Nor could they discern any trace of the only animal known to use fire—man.

To the utmost wall, everything inflammable was wholly or partly burned. In that ashy expanse of débris no significant detail could be distinguished. Whether spontaneous or incendiary, the sweeping flame had consumed whatever had started it. Thus the long walk served only to complete the tour of the valley.

At this end the explorers found more and larger caverns and box canyons, but these they left uninspected for the present. Acuña, who once had traveled the entire rim above, declared that none of the canyons extended far or contained anything worth looking at. As for the caverns, they peered into one or two but, warned by smells, growls, hisses or gleaming eyes in the farther gloom, refrained from intrusion. It was evident that whatever trustfulness the denizens had shown during dire emergency now had vanished, and that they were ready to defend their lairs with hoofs, fangs or claws.

The trampers discovered also the source of the gulf stream, which, unlike its far outlet, was not a hole in the wall. Instead it was a deep basin in the valley floor, where a powerful spring boiled up from subterranean depths. It was about a half mile from the terminal precipice; and a few rods away rose a low but steep hillock, somewhat bumpy, rather narrow, perhaps sixty feet long and a dozen high. Amid other, higher knolls and deep ravines it seemed insignificant. Yet Davidson regarded it thoughtfully.

"This thing has a regularity of outline," he commented, "which suggests a house, a burial mound, or something of the sort. If we had more time, and the right kind of tools, I'd like to excavate here."

Connell, scanning the low rise, nodded, then yawned.

"The layout's right for a house," he agreed. "Right handy to the spring, too. But that's just the way it happens. Might as well say the spring was an artesian well, and the caves over there were tunnels. And don't talk about diggin', Doc. We've got nothin' to work with, and who wants to work?"

"Not I, just now."

Davidson echoed his yawn. But his gaze still roved over the angular projections. Then it swung to Acuña, who was also intently surveying the mound.

"What do you make of this, *amigo?*" inquired the doctor.

The Peruvian's gaze shot to meet his. In the brown eyes glinted a stabbing light, but instantly it faded into opaque dullness. Wooden faced, the Southerner shrugged.

"Nothing, señor," he countered. "What do you make of it?"

"Nothing definite. It looks odd—perhaps because it is regular among irregularities."

"Ah! *Sí*, that is the reason!" The trader's face brightened. "It puzzled me, but I did not know why. Shall we go, señores?"

He walked away, exhibiting complete indifference to the suggestive formation. The Northerners followed. But, as they trudged along toward camp, Davidson's gaze ahead was often absent. Although his body moved automatically forward, his mind studied something behind.

At last the three plodded into their lean-to hut where Seward waited. The lanky watchman sat lazily against a

corner post, legs outstretched, expression sleepy; but the profusion of short cigaret butts around him testified that he had not slept.

"Anything new?" asked Davidson.

"Not a lousy thing. What's the bad news with you?"

"Nothing."

The doctor's eyelids flickered slightly. Then he stripped for another cool bath. Connell and Acuña followed his example, motions slow. The long day, now ending, had taken heavy toll from every muscle and nerve.

After a frugal supper all four lay down. The sun had gone. Swift night had come. And tonight, at least, the wild beasts of the caves would not be hungry enough to come murderously hunting men; wherefore the men speedily sank into slumber.

Before they slept, however, Davidson and Seward walked over to the base of the near precipice and reassured themselves that the rope was firmly fastened about the anchoring tree. The inspection took them away from the hut for only a few minutes. But in those few minutes the two exchanged words concerning something not closely connected with the problem of escape. And when they returned Slim softly whistled a more or less nonsensical little refrain which meant nothing to Connell or Acuña, but which brought a fleeting twitch to the lips of the doctor:

"By the light of the moon,
By the light of the moon,
By the bright,
Shining light,
By the light of the moon—

With no moon in sight, the ditty would seem irrelevant. But when the whistler was in his hammock he winked at a bright star peering down between small clouds at the eastward. And when he dozed away he did not bury himself in complete oblivion. He had rested all afternoon. And now, at long intervals, he opened one eye.

For some hours the gulf was a pocket of blackness. High above, the cumulous clouds drifted along the deep sky, and the peeping stars crept westward, their tiny lights shedding no radiance into the burned gorge. Outside the hut, far outside, sometimes sounded distant discords suggesting fierce dog fights; but near at hand there was no disturbance. Inside the open shelter Connell snored with rhythmic vigor; Davidson slept silently, but no less deeply; and Acuña was, except for steady breathing, motionless as a corpse.

AT LENGTH a wan light swam along the sunken vale. Above the eastern cliffs crept a moon, old, misshapen, weak, but still potent enough to illuminate open spaces. And with the arrival of that feeble lamp, three eyes opened in the camp beside the creek. One eye was Seward's. The other two were Acuña's.

Seward remained unmoving, sprawled loosely, head on crooked arm. Acuña, with cat-like stealth, arose, rapidly scanning the Northerners; then, tightening his belt and loosening his revolver, he walked forth, leaving his rifle behind. Without a backward look he marched away up the moonlit gulf, stepping quietly, eagerly, resiliently. Although he had slept hardly more than four hours, he strode with the vim of long rest.

There are some men who know the secret of concentrated sleep; who can pack into two, three or four hours the physical revivification which costs other sleepers much more time, and who can wake themselves, fully refreshed, at any predetermined moment. Acuña, jungle traveler and perhaps former soldier, was one of these. There are also men who know the secret of concentrated relaxation without real unconsciousness. Seward, habitually languid, was one of these. And now, silently arising, Slim grinned at the feeble moon and sauntered eastward.

He left his boots behind and walked slowly, taking advantage of every

shadow and often pausing to look around and listen. After a time he heard, some distance ahead, a quiet but steady sound of chopping. Lounging against a tree, he waited until it ceased. Thereafter, still deliberate, he moved on up the creek.

At last he stopped again in the black shadow of a charred treetrunk and stood motionless. Here was the source of the moon-silvered water; and on a rambling hillock moved a whitish shape. It progressed slowly, stopping for long intervals, studying various excrescences, sometimes digging tentatively with a stout stick, then carefully shoving back the fresh dirt and tamping it with a foot.

Meanwhile the watcher silently changed his position to cover the length of the mound. The moon, now higher, lighted the whole scene impartially. And the prodder, absorbed in his work, gave no heed to any faint sounds or shifting shadows. Of small, night-hunting animals he had no fear. Of night-hunting men he had no expectation.

All at once he began digging in earnest. His tool, the stick chopped sometime ago, had a flattened end as well as a pointed one, both shaped by rapid knife work. Now the narrow spade burrowed fast into the vulnerable spot detected by the jabbing spear. Deeper and deeper it went, until the wielder disappeared like a mole. Dirt still arose, piling up at either side of the excavation. But it came more and more slowly, with more and longer pauses. The labor of delving into that hard soil with a wooden implement would eventually exhaust even the most determined digger. And finally the toiler stopped.

Slowly, wearily, he dragged himself out of the hole he had made and slumped on a dirt pile. His stick shovel, worn to a mere mess of splinters resembling a thin broom, lay cast aside. For awhile he sat resting, occasionally turning a dispirited look down into his open tunnel. Then, with a glance at the moon now much farther west, he got up, grasped his implement once more and began pushing the loose earth back into the trench.

After a few shoves, however, he desisted from this useless labor. With sudden petulance he flung the worn-out tool into the cut and turned from it. Drawing a tired arm across his sweaty face, he shuffled toward the spring. A drink and a wash there, a trek back to camp, another two hours of sleep, and he could arise innocently at daybreak. Or so he thought.

But after a few dragging steps he halted, suddenly alert. In the air grew a strange humming, low, then increasing. In the shadow of an angular tree stood a gaunt shape, tall, with a crook at one side—the crook of a long arm akimbo, its hand resting negligently near a holstered revolver. And now the queerly mocking tune issuing from that figure became even more mocking words:

"—light of the moon,
If you'd like to catch a weasel
Just come along with me-e-e,
By the light,
By the light
Of the moo-oo-oon!"

CHAPTER X

CONFESSION

FOR a long minute after the derisive ditty died Acuña stood rigid, hand near his own revolver butt. Then he let it drop limp. The suggestively ready poise of the watcher discouraged any attempt to draw.

With a quiet chuckle Seward ambled forward, gun arm swaying loose, empty handed.

"Well, little man, what's the big idea?" probed Seward.

A scowl of resentment cut into the Peruvian's forehead; resentment at the ridicule of his comparatively short stature. An instant later it vanished, and the Spanish face turned blank, feigning incomprehension. But the gray eyes

had neither missed nor misinterpreted that twitch of temper. And the provocative question had been purposely spoken in English.

"You may as well quit bluffing, old fox," added the Northerner. "I've got the right light on you now. I've been giving you a time exposure. Speak English and talk straight."

For another moment the Southerner stood motionless, combating the inflexible gaze. Then his obduracy weakened. His futile work had sapped his resistance and resilience. Seward, patiently biding his time in the shadows, had awaited just that result.

"All right," wearily yielded the trader. "What do you want to know, Mr. Seward?"

"This: What's your game?"

"This." Acuña nodded toward the mound.

"Uh-huh, that's evident. But what's in it?"

The mustached mouth tightened. After a short pause Acuña evaded—

"I wish I knew."

"Oh, yes?"

"Yes. As you see, I have not yet found anything."

"Uh-huh. Look here, fellow, you're not talking straight yet. You'd better."

The other scowled again.

"Why had I better?" he challenged.

"Because it's better to have me with you than against you."

The gray eyes bored relentlessly into the brown ones. After a few seconds the cornered man admitted:

"Yes, no doubt. Well, let us have a smoke and be comfortable. There are several things to be said."

"That suits me."

Wherewith they sat on the slope and made cigarets. Then Acuña said:

"You will remember that on joining you at Iquitos I stipulated that I should come with you as a free man, not as a paid guide. You will remember that I have brought you men to this place and shown you the dwarfs you were seeking. That was all I promised. I have fulfilled my promise. I am neither an employed man nor a business partner in this expedition. I owe none of you men anything. On the contrary, you owe me much."

"Nobody disputes that," the other conceded. "Go on."

"*Bueno.* You will remember also that I am the discoverer of this valley; that I found it and explored around it before you men ever saw it. You observe also that I have made my own excavation into this hill, asking no help from any of you. And by every right, Señor Seward, this hill and all it holds are mine! I repeat, I owe none of you one *centavo!* And none of you is entitled to one *centavo* of my own findings!"

His voice grew combative. Seward, leisurely exhaling smoke, said:

"Nobody disputes that, either. Keep cool."

"I am cool." The aggressive tone moderated. "And I am glad that you, señor, do not deny my right to this place. I should be still more glad if I could feel that your companions would be equally fair."

The listener's eyes narrowed. Curtly he commanded—

"Tell your story."

"Very well. The story in brief is this:

"MANY years ago, before this valley suddenly fell, it was a gentle stretch of flatness among these heights. On it lived two giants—giants of iron, who dwelt in a house of stone. No arrow could hurt them; no fire could burn their house. They made Indians their slaves and treated them cruelly. But at last the Indian gods shook the earth and made the giants and their house and land fall into a deep pit, and thus destroyed them.

"So says one Indian tale. It is not the same as the other Indian story about the little animals, but I believe it is truer. And this low hill is, I believe, the house of the iron giants, whose iron, of course, was steel armor. When the

crash came, the stone house fell in and killed them. The winds and rains spread dirt on the stones and covered everything. Now those old dead men can be nothing but worm-eaten bones. But somewhere inside this long ruin must be the gold they gathered. And worms do not eat gold!"

He started up and looked along the hillside, face alight. Seward, unmoved, regarded him cynically.

"Uh-huh. I figured you had gold on the brain," said he. "But what makes you think they gathered gold?"

"Ah! Why, they must have done so! For what other reason would they live here?"

"Don't ask me. But you know, don't you, that the rock around here is not gold-bearing?"

Acuña looked blank.

"No!"

"Well, it's not," Seward declared easily. "I've looked over some of it. And in years gone by I've done enough prospecting to know barren rock when I see it. If your giants were gold miners, they'd be fools to build their house where there was no gold, wouldn't they?"

The treasure hunter's tired face grew gloomy. Grudgingly he admitted—

"It would seem so."

"You bet it would." The Northerner laughed tolerantly. "Gold? Humph! The trouble with you, *hombre,* is too much imagination. Also too much slyness. Even if this hunk of dirt was full of gold, how do you think you could dig it out in one night with a stick? And how do you think you'd get away with it? But never mind that. Maybe you were worried because Doc and Connell saw this place today, and you had to try to beat them to it, eh?"

"Exactly," admitted the other. "They spoke of excavating."

"Oh, did they? Hm! That would be the Doc's idea, probably. But don't worry about him, or any of us. We're not crazy enough to tackle this thing without tools—or with them, either. It's too much work. If you still yearn to peck it apart, go ahead and amuse yourself. Whatever you find is all yours, even if it's a mint."

The trader eyed him skeptically.

"I mean it," assured Seward. "Figure it out for yourself. Dr. Davidson is interested only in science. Connell is rich—rotten rich. And I myself don't give a damn for gold grubbing. I did once, but it got me nothing but trouble; and now I'm cured. I get less work, more kick and more money out of pictures; and I'm satisfied with that. So who cares if you make some money here? Not one of us, unless you give us a dirty deal while you make it. You've already given us one or two, and one more would be just too bad."

At the last sentence the Southerner bristled.

"In what way have I given you a dirty deal, as you call it?"

"Radio."

The curt word staggered the trader like an expert punch to the jaw. Short, swift, solid, it hit hard. His eyes swerved. Deliberately the Northerner arose and mercilessly continued:

"I told you I had the right light on you now, *hombre,* and I mean it. You got rid of that radio for your own reasons. You picked your own Indians, for your own reasons. You let yourself be photographed as we came along, but you didn't intend to let those pictures go out. Some accident would happen to them. Also to us. And now it's happened. The only thing wrong with your sweet little scheme is that you're caught with us. You've been a very smooth worker, but not quite smooth enough. Something's slipped somewhere in your racket; something's happened sooner than you'd planned, and—"

"Señor, that is false!" came sharp contradiction.

"Oh, yes?"

"Yes! Make no more such charges!" The brown eyes were steady now. "Let me speak.

"I admit that I have deceived you in some ways since the start. I admit that I concealed my knowledge of English, so that you would speak unguardedly within my hearing. I admit also that I permitted the launch crew to steal your radio. I admit, further, that you are not entirely wrong about the photographs. That is, I meant to cause some accident to those films which picture me. But not to any others, or to you.

"My only reason for doing, or meaning to do, these things is this: Some time ago I made a bad mistake, a political mistake which—ah—involved me in a disturbance and—"

"Call it a revolution," interrupted Seward.

"Very well. The point is that I can not afford to be traced by my political enemies. A description of me broadcast by radio, as Connell suggested just after I got rid of the thing, would be very bad for my health. So would the exhibition of motion pictures of me, even in your North America. The present government has secret agents in all civilized countries.

"Here in the uncivilized part of my own country I am safe enough, unless attention is called to me. I am supposed to have been fatally wounded in the political disagreement. So there is no interest in plain Pablo Acuña, petty jungle trader, who seldom visits Iquitos and steps cautiously while there. But in Colonel Juan Gonz—"

He stopped short, teeth snapping shut on the last name. The listener chuckled.

"I didn't hear that last," he drawled. "But I get you, Pablo, on the rest of it. And I tell you what I'll do, if we ever get back topside. I'll cut you out of every film you're on, and give you the cuts. They're only short shots of atmosphere, anyway."

"That would be most agreeable to me, and most generous of you. Well, I now have made a clean breast of it. If you think I had also planned to leave you men here in this hole, or to cause a fire, or to do any other murderous act, you wrong me. In that case I should have managed the matter more efficiently." A saturnine smile lifted his mustache. "Furthermore, you must realize that it would be quite embarrassing to me if I should fail to bring you men safely back to the Rio Ucallaga. You are a well advertised expedition, and there would be inquiries which would turn a searchlight on your guide. I do not desire any such light."

SEWARD nodded, drew the last puff from his cigaret and flipped it away.

"Uh-huh. You're talking straight enough now," he acknowledged. "And it's been a case of mutual misunderstanding, or mistrust, or something. You were suspicious of us, and that made us suspicious of you."

"And," broke in the other, "I still am suspicious, very suspicious, of one member of your company. But for him I might have been much more frank before now."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning Connell. Of Dr. Davidson I have had no distrust at any time; and I have been pained to observe that he felt some distrust of me. Of you, señor, I have been doubtful at times; you are not easy to fathom. Of Connell I have had no uncertainty since I first saw him. He is a hog! Rotten rich, yes, as you say. But the more rotten a hog is with riches, the more greedily he rushes at more. And—"

He paused, looking again at his hillock, then shrugged and added:

"But what does that matter now? If, as you say, no gold can be here, any pig may as well root at this dirt."

"Uh-huh," dryly assented Seward. "But nobody will. What I said goes. It's all yours. If Connell needs any handling to keep him out of it, I'll handle him. He's really not so bad as you think; he's more bull than pig, and I'm a good bull thrower, if I do say so myself. But I'm sort of glad you said that. It gives me the right light on

various things, including you. And now I'm going back to my luxurious bed. Coming?"

He started away. Acuña looked at his receding back, at the long hillock which had caused so much distrust, at his futile boring into its hard slope; then, with a muttered curse on it, strode fast after the loosely ambling Northerner. And as the moon cruised westward the two who had stolen up the valley with mutual suspicion walked down it with new understanding.

CHAPTER XI

SUSPENSE

A LONG day dragged past; the longest, perhaps, which any of the four imprisoned men had ever lived. With every passing hour the growing suspense of waiting, coupled with the funereal atmosphere of the black gulf, weighed more heavily on all minds.

Even the sky, hitherto clear enough except for lazily floating clouds, now was dismal—a dull, low expanse of leaden gray. Sunless, the rockbound gorge was chilly, damp and utterly dreary. And in the wan light moved hungry little horses whose dumbly eloquent dejection proved that already they knew themselves to be doomed.

"Poor little beggars!" Davidson sympathized. "I wish there were some way to save you."

Seward nodded, and Connell grunted agreement. And even Acuña, habitually callous toward animals, looked pityingly at them now.

Food at breakfast was scant, comprising only scraps remaining from the previous meals. So, after a smoke, Acuña picked up his rifle and coolly declared:

"We must have meat. I shall go and get it."

He spoke in English. With a straight look at Seward, he then walked downstream, away from the direction of his hill of visionary gold.

Connell and Davidson stared after him, astonished by his use of their language. Thus far Seward had said nothing of his discoveries by moonlight. Now, tacitly given leave to reveal whatever he thought it advisable to tell, he took the bull by the horns.

"Acuña and I had a talk last night," he announced. "And we've been getting the fellow all wrong. He's a square shooter."

"Oh, yeah?" demanded Connell, eyeing him dubiously.

"Oh, yeah. And the reason why he's sometimes made us think he wasn't square, Connell, is because he thought you weren't."

"Hey?" The big man reddened.

"You heard me the first time. And I can see how he got that way. Maybe you will when I tell you a few things, or maybe not. Anyway, listen."

Thereafter he related what he chose to reveal. Omitting revelation of Acuña's real name, past status, or reason for being a jungle trader, he spoke of the strangely regular hillock; told of its legendary origin, and of the Peruvian's belief that it held treasure. He did not mention the fact that he had shadowed the Southerner, or that the latter had dug into the stony slope. The inference of his concise narrative was that the pair had simply talked somewhere nearby, and that Acuña had told his tale without compulsion. When he concluded he studied his hearers.

Davidson, gazing absently at the creek, nodded slowly, his expression one of mingled relief and regret that the dwarfs thus were proved modern. Connell's face held a mixture of shrewdness and avidity.

"Gold!" gloated Connell. "Mmm-hm! Sure, I see how he got that way. He wanted to hold out on us and hog it all."

" 'Hog' is just the word he used about you." Seward clipped the words. "And it fits you better than him. You're thinking you're going to grab it—after he found it. That's just what he thought

you'd want to do, and you're proving he was right. But don't get hot about it. There's no gold there."

Connell, doubly red at the stinging characterization of himself, had half risen. Now he sank back, stopped by the last words.

"No gold? What d'you mean?" he challenged.

"There's no gold rock around here. There's been none anywhere along our way up here. I've watched. So how would gold get here?"

Gloom clouded Connell's visage. The caustic Seward, he had learned, was never a liar and seldom wrong. Before he could muster a retort his antagonist added:

"All that hill's good for is to explain how horses happened to get here. Dogs too, maybe. Men brought the horses here. The men got bumped off when their heavy house flopped on them; but the horses, out in the open, or in light stables, came through. Am I right, Doc?"

"Yes, I think so," agreed Davidson. "I thought of that yesterday when I saw that ruin. To me it is undoubtedly the wreck of an ancient house; an unusually pretentious house for such a region, but not without precedent. I have seen, in even more isolated places, ruins of much more elaborate structures which had been erected by men who wished only to escape from the world and be kings of nothing. And I believe that such has been the case here.

"You are quite right in saying there is not gold-bearing rock hereabouts. I happen to know something of geology, and I have looked things over. So, as you say, the only value of that queer hill is to explain the origin of the horses, and probably of the dogs. Now that Acuña has spoken out, we have the missing link. And we all owe much to Acuña. For my part, I wish his hill were full of treasure, and that he could carry it all out and live happy ever after."

"I told him you'd feel that way," said Seward. "You and Connell both."

With which he sauntered toward the cliff for a useless inspection of the undisturbed rope. Connell stared after him, rubbed his jaw and gradually grinned. Davidson walked out toward some wandering horses. No more was said.

A LONG time later a dull gunshot sounded far downstream. Still later Acuña came plodding campward with a backload of red meat. The thick hide, heavy bones and all entrails of the slain dwarf tapir had been left at the spot of the kill, and the solid sustenance remaining was all contained in a pack which he had contrived from his shirt. But even this comparatively small load had wearied him; his legs lagged, and when he dropped his burden in the hut he staggered against a corner post.

The grueling labor of the bygone night, of which Connell and Davidson still knew nothing, had not been offset by his short sleep at dawn and his meager breakfast. But, recovering balance, he silently drew his machete, walked to a charred tree nearby and began hacking at a low branch to obtain firewood.

"Hey!" rumbled Connell. "Give me that!"

He strode toward the worker, took away his blade and chopped steadily. Acuña watched him a moment, looked at Seward and Davidson, smiled wanly and squatted against a tree bole. Never before had Connell volunteered for such labor. Now his rough friendliness assured the trader that he was accepted into full fellowship.

A hearty dinner of broiled meat strengthened them all. Toward the end of the meal Acuña silently pointed downstream. There, half hidden behind treetrunks, were several wolfish dogs, drawn from somewhere by the drifting odor of roasting flesh. Finding the eyes of the men on them, they snarled and drew back a little, but still watched. In

LAST DOOR
Mercer Ave., Ie Eastern Th

their sneaky vigilance was none of the wistful appeal of the lost horses. Their attitude was hostile, predatory, irreconcilably savage.

"Growing bolder," commented Davidson. "We'd better keep a fire burning tonight."

"It would be wise," agreed Acuña. "Also it would be well to hang the meat up in some tree, at a distance from here. Otherwise we shall have no sleep."

"I wonder," suggested Connell. "Do you suppose we could tame some of 'em by feedin' 'em? I kind of like dogs."

"Not a chance," disagreed Seward. "Those brutes are untamable. And this is no free lunch counter."

"Quite right," said Davidson. "We couldn't if we would; and I, for one, wouldn't. I like dogs as well as any one —decent, friendly, intelligent dogs. But these degenerates are vicious murderers, as bad as snakes. Hi! Get out, you curs!"

He threw a small stone. The beasts dodged back and, for a time, departed. Later, however, they reappeared, and more with them; wary, half daring, showing their teeth, but holding their distance. As they came no nearer, the men ignored them.

Acuña, sleepy, lay down for the siesta, after stowing the reserve meat on overhead poles and replenishing the fire. The other three, at Seward's suggestion, participated in photography. He still had some unused film; and the afternoon light, although still dull, was strong enough for unhurried work. By slow, patient stalking, the cameraman succeeded in obtaining closeups of several dwarf horses.

Moreover, finding one animal which seemed either very trusting or partly blind, he pictured Connell standing beside it, apparently resting one broad hand on its shoulders, although the hand actually did not quite touch. The contrast between the burly man and the short beast accentuated the dwarfishness of the horse; and when the exposure ended both the photographer and his subject were much pleased.

"That'll be good stuff," predicted Slim. "Nobody can say now the midgets were faked."

"Not much, they can't!" crowed Connell. "Not with me in the scene. Say, d'you think I'll come out good in that?"

"Fine. That is, as well as you could come out in anything, you big stiff. As a movie actor you're a good barrel of beer."

The big man chuckled at the slur. Seward went on:

"Now I've got just a few feet left. Come on, we'll shoot it on that little stallion over there, if he'll act pretty."

They moved on in dogged pursuit of pictures, none outwardly admitting that hope of ever exhibiting those scenes was virtually gone. Lost men in a lost world of lost beasts, they both followed up their quest and killed time which otherwise would have gnawed incessantly at their nerves. With the last shot at the stallion, however, they had no more surcease from thinking of their stark plight. And as they wended their way back toward camp nobody spoke.

The day was far gone, growing dark. Their work, though slow, had taken them some distance up the gulf. Now, returning, they looked repeatedly but vainly for the thin rope against the poorly lighted precipice. At last, as they advanced, they discerned it, still limp. Then suddenly all stopped short, That dead line was showing life.

Down it came, a-quiver, increasing to a widening swing across the bare stone face. Some one or something far above was experimenting with it or, perhaps, trying to signal. The oscillation widened still more, then slowly narrowed and died. A moment later, from up on the heights, sounded a far, faint shout.

Then from the hut somewhere ahead cracked a rifle shot. As the echoes rattled along the cliffs a voice yelled:

"Amigos! Aquí! Here, friends! *Pronto!"*

The gun and the voice were those of

Acuña. The Americans leaped into a headlong dash.

CHAPTER XII

RESCUE

GROUPED at the foot of the rope, four men peered up it with mingled eagerness and doubt. One spoke, voice vibrant with joyous excitement, yet controlled.

"Señores, I think—I hope—our men have returned. But let us not be too hasty. It may be well to make use of the field glasses."

He ran toward the hut, where the binoculars hung in their cases. Seward loped after him. Snatching the squatty leather containers, they raced on across the creek to the far wall. There, with the best obtainable angle of view, they studied the upper extremity of the vital line.

At the frame stood three or four men. They were big men. One of them, seemingly understanding the activity below, gestured with wide arm sweeps. But, in the murky dullness up there, the identity of the far figures could not be discerned by the watchers. Perhaps they were Coquibos, or perhaps not.

"*Bien,*" shrugged the Peruvian. "One of us must take a chance. With your permission, I will go up first."

"You haven't that permission," countered Seward. "I got us all into this jam, and I'll take the chance of getting us out. It's safe enough, anyway. If those chaps wanted to kill us, why should they haul anybody up? All they have to do is cut the rope."

"It may be that they want that rope. Eight hundred feet of good rope are worth having. The first man up may take a club on the head when he arrives."

"Oh, I see. Well, that makes the trip all the more interesting. And I'm taking it. Let's go!"

He strode back across the valley. Reaching the top of the knoll, he tersely announced:

"I'm going for a ride. No arguments!"

With that he unfastened the rope from its tree anchor and yanked a signal. Promptly the cord started sliding upward. As the slack neared its end, Seward got into the seat. A moment later he was swung off the ground.

Up, up, up rose the short chair and its gaunt burden, climbing steadily into the grayness. As the precipice crawled past him, Slim rode, hard-mouthed, hard-eyed, fixedly watching the stone. At length, near the top, he shot a look up at the projecting frame and saw, at either side, a brown face peering down, and, gripping the rope harder with his left hand, he drew his revolver with his right. Holding it unaimed but ready, he awaited the crucial moment.

A voice grunted. The rope halted. Seward dangled at the verge, eyes stabbing into the brown ones beyond. Then his taut trigger finger loosened. The men awaiting him were Coquibos, and none held a club. Instead, those nearest grasped the barbed pole used for pulling the seat inward.

Reaching carefully, they notched the hook over the rope and heaved backward. The passenger swung in, slid from his perilous chair and stood confronting the Indians.

They were few. Of the ten who had been there when he went down, only five remained. These, as his sharp gaze swept from face to face, eyed him stolidly, but with a touch of diffidence. Among them was Uruki, crew captain, whose expression was distinctly hangdog.

"Where have you been?" demanded the American.

"*Allá*—there," vaguely answered the leader, moving his chin toward the forest.

Then, turning away, he grunted to the men at the windlass. At once they unreeled the line, dropping it fast toward the three whites waiting far below.

Seward said no more. Explanations could wait. As the chair descended, his

eyes moved to the near hut which, more roomy than the tent previously used, had been built for the señores. His face contracted.

The place seemed to have been pillaged. The pole table which had held compactly arranged supplies was almost bare. Glancing at the shelter used by the Indians, he found it completely stripped. And the Coquibos themselves, even while working, frequently looked sidewise at the woods. Uruki did not work. Standing now with long bow and arrow in hand, he scanned all surroundings, obviously on guard.

The next rise of the seat brought Acuña who, after one hard look at the Indians and a searching gaze around, snapped sharp questions in the jungle dialect. The Coquibo leader grunted in a tone half sullen, half placating. Peremptory retort rapped from the trader. Leaving the two to talk, Seward signaled to the workers to send the rope down again. They obeyed with alacrity, and thereafter worked more easily. The arrival of the Spaniard, with his rifle and his masterful, autocratic manner seemed to have heartened them.

Connell came up next, tight lipped but open eyed. The sickening fear which had ridden him on the way down was under control now; and when he stepped again on solid soil he stood steadily, although with jaws still locked. He did not relax until after Davidson, coolly composed, had risen to complete the company.

Then, with a vast breath, Connell rumbled:

"Well, here we are again. And I'll tell the world I'm all through with bein' a human fly. Now what's been goin' on around here?"

"Acuña's finding out." Seward nodded toward the Peruvian and the Coquibo commander. "We'll hear."

The Indian leader was now talking in a steady monotone, with occasional short gestures. Acuña, silent, inflexibly watched his eyes. The Northerners regarded both, then walked to their house.

THERE, after a frowning look around, each went to the same sort of thing—a short, tough trunk, small but heavy. Keys clicked, lids rose, and hands seized tobacco. A moment later the air thickened with the combined smoke of cigar, cigaret and pipe, and three men relaxed with unexpressed thankfulness. Although virtually everything else had disappeared, the trunks contained what each owner valued most: Seward's photographic supplies; Davidson's scientific instruments; Connell's cigars and much metal money; also plentiful ammunition and many personal articles. Nothing else mattered much at the moment.

"From hell to heaven," succinctly remarked Seward.

"That's a mouthful," assented Connell.

Davidson, soberly puffing, said nothing. His eye dwelt on Acuña.

Soon the trader turned from the Indian and joined them, his expression puzzled.

"I do not quite understand it," he confessed. "The story is this:

"First, these men believe this is a place of demons. One can, perhaps, hardly blame them for that. It is a hellish sort of place, especially since the fire. But they have seen no demons.

"They do not know what started the fire. They do not know what became of the two men sent to warn us. Those men never came back. Another man went alone to find them, and disappeared also. Two more, brothers, became rebellious and deserted, running back to the river, seizing a canoe and fleeing for the Ucallaga. Then those remaining here fell into a panic and ran in their turn. Most of them believed we three had died in the fire down yonder, and that you, friend Seward, had also been caught by the demons. The captain stayed long enough to send down that bundle of food for us, in case we still lived, and then chased after his men. Finding he could do nothing with

them, he went with them in the last canoe.

"They traveled a long way with the current before he could master them. Today he made them come back; but it cost them nearly all the day to work up the stream. The two who took the first canoe have not been seen since.

"When they all deserted here they took only their weapons and paddles, abandoning everything else. Now, as you see, everything but these trunks is gone.

"So that is the whole story, as Uruki tells it. I believe he tells all he knows. And I can well understand how these men could be swept off their feet by panic. The bravest Indians, who will fight anything they can see, become like children in the dark when they believe they are persecuted by forest fiends. But I do not comprehend who or what these fiends are, or how they destroyed three strong Coquibos, or why they stole everything else and yet left these trunks and the rope."

A silence followed. The Indians grouped at the windlass watched the whites, who smoked in wordless conjecture. Then Acuña added:

"They now wish us to go at once with them away from this accursed place. There is still an hour of daylight."

Davidson's jaw hardened. He glanced toward the gulf.

"I, for one, am not inclined to go today," he refused.

"Nor I," seconded Seward.

Connell, scowling pugnaciously at the darkening jungle, declared—

"I'd like to see the devils that'll run me out!"

"*Bueno.*" Acuña smiled. "I too feel that way. Well, then—Uruki! *Aquí!*"

Uruki stalked forward. Acuña spoke curtly. The brown visage lowered, and a reply came growlingly. A short argument ensued, ending with emphatic assertion by the trader. The Indian grunted once, grudgingly assenting. Thereupon the Peruvian picked up his rifle.

"We stay tonight," he told the Northerners. "And as we have no food, I now take the boys hunting. We shall return soon—probably. Till then, guard yourselves."

He walked off. The Coquibos, after a momentary hesitation, followed him, weapons ready. The six faded into the woods and were gone—a war-like body united by the dominance of the Spaniard. Whatever his failings might be, the ex-officer knew how to handle subordinates.

A long time passed—long to the waiting watchers, although it was considerably less than an hour. The dim forest gave forth no sound, revealed no lurking shape or flitting shadow. The live men who had vanished into the gloom, the invisible demons who had obliterated others, all seemed gone forever. At last, however, moving figures materialized from the dusk. The leader was Acuña. Behind came the Coquibos, bearing meat—two peccaries, a big monkey and a curassow turkey—slain by silent arrows.

"*Buenas noches!*" greeted the trader. "No demons have called? We found none, either. And to hell with all devils! We eat, we sleep—perhaps—and so ends this day. Who cares for tomorrow?"

Grins answered. A fire blazed, banishing chills and broiling flesh. And while all else disappeared into blackness, nine men replenished their strength and made ready for the night. Whether or not malignant spirits prowled the jungle, the tiny army of invaders, recently sunk or routed, now shrunken by losses, was reunited and defiantly ready for war against anything.

CHAPTER XIII

BONES AND GOLD

NO WAR came that night to the camp. Down in the gulf raged pitiless fights; but up on the heights the only onslaught was that of rain. Soon after dark the hovering

cloud bank belched water in a torrential deluge, as if seeking to drown the heartening fire of the intruders. But the weather-wise Coquibos had anticipated that and built new blazes under their own roof and that of the white men. So, when the flood descended, it killed only the dying coals of the open cook-fire. The other flames burned on, small, smoky, but steady.

Balked, the rain came in tempestuous mountain squalls, flooding furiously, then stopped for long periods to gather force for new outbursts. In the silent intermissions the deep gorge gave up ghastly noises telling of increasing slaughter—equine screams, canine choruses, feline screeches full of ferocity. The starving horses, weakening under the double strain of hunger and hopelessness, were already falling easy prey to the conversely invigorated wild dogs and cats; and the destroyers, blood maddened, were killing with senseless greed.

Near at hand nothing visible or audible moved. Night-prowling beasts stayed silent and absent, perhaps dominated by the weather. Toward morning a final roaring rain drowned everything in watery tumult. Then, in a swiftly clearing sky, the sun rose.

Seward, last on watch, fired a wanton revolver shot. Men in both huts leaped awake, grabbing at weapons; then, seeing nothing dangerous, relaxed and turned to him.

"Sunrise gun." He grinned. "No demons. Not a thing anywhere. But my watch is up, and that's that. Now what, director?"

"Now," responded Davidson, stretching, "for a day's work. The last, I hope. By tonight we should be through here."

Breakfast followed, a meal which the white men downed with some difficulty. Fresh flesh, tough, unsalted, unrelieved by other flavors, was growing distasteful. When it ended Davidson remarked:

"Slim, you want more pictures. I feel inclined to go in for the rural occupation of horse raising. So we two can—"

"What's that?" interjected Connell. "Horse raisin'? What d'you mean?"

"Just that." The doctor chuckled, then sobered. "If you fellows will stand by, I will try to save those little horses, raise them on our private elevator and turn them loose. There can not be many of them left now, and I would like to rescue those few from the infernal dogs. I grant that such a performance may seem silly sentimentality; but it is not without some practical merit. Slim can get some excellent pictures to round out our record, including some of you, Bull, handling the beasts up here. You can tie up a few until we come back."

Connell, at first dubiously resistant, beamed as the speaker concluded. The pictorial angle was highly pleasing. So was the doctor's casual use of his Northern nickname, making him feel that he was truly one of the gang.

"Yeah, that's right!" he heartily assented.

"As I was saying, Slim and I can work together on the horses," pursued Davidson. "As for the other beasts, especially the dogs—" his tone hardened— "I shall take with me plenty of cartridges. We shall send them up dead. Their hides, skulls and bones will be kept as scientific specimens. Perhaps Mr. Acuña will help us to gather those."

"*Con mucho gusto,*" agreed the Peruvian. "My gun needs exercise. But I will ask you to do without me until later in the day. I wish to walk elsewhere this morning."

He nodded westward, where the three Coquibos had vanished without trace.

"Alone," he added. "The Indians will remain here to work, superintended by Señor Connell."

After a long look at him and the jungle, Davidson nodded shortly. The Southern adventurer well knew how to take care of himself.

"Very well," he assented. "Just explain to the Indians, and then we'll be moving."

And, when Uruki had digested the arrangement, they moved. Acuña walked noiselessly into the shadows, carrying his

rifle and Seward's binoculars. Seward and Davidson, heavily equipped, descended the precipice in turn. Connell, grimly watchful, stayed on guard. The Coquibos, heartened by bright sun, the presence of an armed white man and the absence of demons, performed their tasks without hesitancy.

When they had lowered both Northerners, the brown men chopped small boughs, luxuriant with green leaves, from near trees and tossed them over the brink. Down below, Davidson and Seward picked up a couple of the first branches and fared eastward. From that end of the valley had come the rush of horses when the fire swept the land; and at that end, in the canyons and caves nearest to the rough tomb of their long dead owners, the men believed most of the equine survivors to be gathered. They were not mistaken.

As they went they saw, here and there, carcasses of newly slain horses, partly eaten or not eaten at all—animals killed in last night's saturnalia of the maddened dogs and cats. Soon they met a solitary stallion, desperately moving along the waste, head low, motions slow, smelling the air for food. As the faint odor of green leaves entered his nostrils he halted, eyeing the men who softly advanced. Then he trotted forward, new life in his limbs. As he came he voiced a high, trumpeting call.

That noise, echoing far along the cliffs, brought forth other stallions, mares and colts from spots unseen by the bearers of branches. Before the first male had fairly seized upon the greenery which now enticingly retreated toward the long rope, the desolate expanse was dotted by moving dwarfs. From that time onward the work of the rescuers was fast.

They had come down with spare rope, cut from the overlong cord on the winch, and with electric torches for search of the black caves. They needed only a short piece of the rope, enough to make a sling, and no light at all. The starving midgets flocked from near and far to snatch at the heap of verdure which, hurled from on high by methodical choppers, kept dropping. Meanwhile equally mechanical hoisters at the distant windlass wound up the easily caught little bodies; and the photographer below shot film until he had more than enough of the subject.

Time passed unheeded by the workers below. At last, fatigued, they stopped and sat down heavily, mopping sweat from their faces, but grinning happily at each other. If any horse remained in the long valley it was too old, too young, or too senseless to join the hegira initiated by the first stallion and, therefore, predestined to death. How many others had gone aloft neither man knew. Both had lost count. But, as the doctor had foreseen, the number surviving the fire had decreased much during the past night.

"Now," said Davidson, with a long breath, "I can go without regrets."

"Me too," agreed Seward. "We seen our duty and we done it, and that's that. But now what about the other critters? I've got some shots left."

His head moved toward his camera, but his thumb rubbed along his cartridge belt. The other animals, the destructive dogs and cats, still were out of the picture; glutted, perhaps, by last night's blood feast, and sleeping it off. Davidson's face narrowed.

"So have I, Slim. But who cares about them now? They'll finish themselves. Let them."

Rising, he turned toward the rope, which was descending once more. Then he stopped. The sling was bringing down a burden—Acuña, bearing food and news.

"All is quiet up there," he announced. "Thanks to your glasses, I have found something of interest down here. After we eat I will show you it."

His tone was grim; and, after a look at him, the others asked no questions. All ate, more hungrily than at breakfast; then walked westward near the base of the endless precipice.

SOME distance away, a vulture rose from something lying among the stones. With mouths tightening, the three marchers contemplated the mangled wreck of a tall man. Bones broken by a long fall and nearly stripped of flesh by birds or beasts, he was unrecognizable but undoubtedly one of the Coquibos.

Wordless, the Peruvian resumed progress. About two hundred yards farther he stopped again. Here, likewise smashed on the rocks and nearly devoured, sprawled two more long-boned cadavers.

"Notice one thing," prompted Acuña. "There is no sign of their breech-clouts."

True, the grisly débris showed no rags or strings, torn away by beaks or talons.

"Hm!" muttered Davidson. "What do you make of it?"

"These two," explained the jungle rover, "are those who ran to warn us. The other is the one who tried to trace them. All were killed by something in the forest up there, stripped and thrown off. By what? *Quién sabe?*"

"No tracks?"

"None. If there were any, the rain has erased them. I found these two only by noticing that small bushes at the edge were somewhat broken."

He turned away; then, gritting an oath, he jerked up his rifle and fired. A few rods off, a small shape kicked, yelped, died. Several others dodged, snarled and went down in rapid succession under a hail of bullets. Seward and Davidson now were shooting with Acuña. The heavy jawed, heavy bellied dogs which had emerged from some near hole never regained their lair.

"So," growled the trader, advancing and kicking the carcasses, "you devils have already become man eaters!"

Davidson's mouth turned down. After a glance at the fleshless human bones he walked quickly eastward. His companions followed, leaving the slain brutes for the vultures. Whether or not they could obtain others as specimens, none of them wanted the beasts found so suggestively near the skeletons.

Before reaching the elevator they spied and shot several more dogs and a spotted cat which, evidently aroused by the reverberating gunfire, appeared from unseen dens. These they carried along and sent aloft. Then said Davidson:

"Everything considered, we might as well be going. We have done all we can."

Seward nodded. Acuña looked wistfully toward the upper end of the valley, squinted at the sun and demurred:

"There is no urgent haste. The sun still is high. Let us walk to the source of the stream and—ah—collect more animals as we go."

"Not I," declined the doctor. "But you go, if you like. We'll wait above."

"*Bueno.* I shall not delay you long."

"One hour," stipulated Seward. "No more."

"Agreed."

He struck off briskly. The Northerners smiled faintly at each other as they prepared to ascend. They knew he went, not to collect specimens, but to look his last at the grave of a golden dream.

UNDER the hot sun the Spaniard strode fast, disregarding a few animals which he spied here and there. Reaching the long mound, he walked more slowly along it, stopping at last at the futile boring he had made. Eyeing this with a bitter smile of self-derision, he suddenly started. It ended in an open hole.

"*Por Dios!*" he exclaimed. "The rain—"

With that he leaped inward. The violent rains of last night, repeatedly sluicing his narrow cut, had washed out earth at the terminus and created a sizable opening. Beyond was dark vacancy. Striking a match and wishing for the unused electric torches carried by the Northerners, he peered in. Then he crawled through, waited for vision to

adjust itself to the subdued daylight entering the orifice. He moved around, intently examining everything. He was in a wrecked room, littered with débris, bulging here and buckling there along its ruined walls, but partly roofed by tough beams and planking not yet decayed. On the floor were two heavy chairs, upset; a strong table down at one end; and various pieces of metal, some mere rust-eaten fragments, some black but whole. At one end, where collapsed stones and inblown earth formed a slanting wall, lay what seemed the crumbly bones of a big human foot and shin; all else was buried by the ancient débris.

Scouting the floor with intent gaze, lighting matches when necessary, he crawled about and collected. Then, at the hole, he peered at what he had picked up, scratched with his knife and laughed. He had a couple of candlesticks, rather crudely molded; an open palm oil lamp, also evidently home-made; and a double handful of small, rough pebbles gathered from a heap of dirt which had been partly surrounded by the crackly fragments of an ancient skin bag. All were heavily coated with earth and grime. But all, his knife had proved, were solid gold.

Although both Seward and Davidson had been accurate in their judgment of the near rock, Acuña's somewhat illogical dream had also been truth.

These pebbles were nuggets; the smaller particles in the old bag were gold dust. It was alluvial gold. The iron giants who fancied this high valley for their home had forced Indians to dig in far streams and fetch their findings here. They had inexpertly but cannily melted and molded the small stuff into whatever solid implements they wished to make. If ever they should decide to go forth, such solids would be easily portable. And somewhere else in this ruin must be many more such utensils, or bricks, or what not, manufactured from the same precious material by the queer recluses.

Eagerly the finder again turned inward. But then he stopped, stood thinking, and grew grave. After awhile he put down the candlesticks, the lamp and all the nuggets but one, the largest. Dropping this into a pocket, he went forth into the daylight. There he walked to the vigorous spring and washed his hands, face and head. Then, cleansed, he did a rather odd thing. Hat off, he looked straight into the sky and spoke to no mortal ear.

"*Padre Dios,* I give thanks," he said. "It seems that after a bad time, through which I have tried to live decently, you have led me now to better fortune. It seems also that you do not wish the *Norteamericanos* to know of my luck. They have refused to believe; they have refused to walk here with me today. So now I go away with them, saying nothing, and leaving all this to your protection. If it is your will that I come back to possess what is here, show me my way. If not—once more I give thanks. At least you have shown me something for which to live and strive."

After which remarkable prayer, ex-Colonel Juan Gonzalez put on his hat and marched swiftly back to rejoin his tiny command and his foreign allies.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DEMONS

CAMP was breaking up. The dwarf horses, photographed for the last time, had gone into the strange upper jungle to find plenteous food and defend their stunted lives as best they could. The dwarf dogs and cat were skinned and boned. The elevator, no longer needed, was being stripped of its rope by a couple of nude Coquibos, one unreeling, the other coiling. The three other Indians, also denuded for work, stood ready to carry the trunks of the Northerners.

The aliens, lounging against corner posts of their hut, cast occasional perfunctory looks at the forest which had still betrayed no demons. The Peru-

vian, mask-faced, watched all.

"If you señores have no further need of that rope," he suddenly declared, "I would like to buy it from you."

"Buy it? Hell, it's all yours, free for nothin', if you want it," said Connell. "The only use we've got for it now is maybe to let the boat down through the rapids."

"We may need it for that," agreed Acuña. "And afterward, a good rope is useful for many things in the wilderness. Thank you, señor."

He glanced out at the gulf, then at the windlass, eyes glinting. Some time soon, if God willed—

The rope was coiled. The coilers slung it over their broad left shoulders, grasped weapons and walked away in single file. The trunk bearers lifted their loads and trudged after. The whites lingered, taking one last look around; then, deliberate and careless, they followed the aborigines. The Valley of Dwarfs was gone behind them; the sun-splashed jungle was quiet around them, and ahead waited the open waterway to—

"*Cra!* What is that?" exclaimed Acuña, stopping short.

Down beyond, in the dim woods where the burdened Coquibos had disappeared, were sudden low disturbances—a muffled cry, vague thuds, vaguer rustles and rushes amid brush and leaves.

"*Los diablos!*" he guessed. "They strike again!"

With a click of his rifle hammer he plunged forward. The Americans ran at his heels.

Before them opened a small glade surrounded by rough boulders and heavy timber. In the open space lay the rope and the trunks, hastily dropped. In the adjacent shadows the Coquibos were fighting other shadows—shadows which flitted from tree to rock, from rock to bush, vanished, reappeared, were nowhere and everywhere.

From those evanescent shapes came low hissing sounds and malevolent squeaks, suggesting both snakes and rats. From the maddened stalwarts of the Ucallaga rumbled throaty growls. Snapping arrows at half seen figures, rushing at coverts to strike, or stop balked by nothingness, the big fellows were lunging about like bulls battling hornets.

As the riflemen dashed into the clearing, one of the nearest Coquibos staggered, braced himself desperately, then sank and lay still. Another, moving with inexplicable lethargy, set one shoulder against a tree and drew bow with hand far too slow. As the arrow flew impotently past another tree he stared stupidly, fumbled for a fresh shaft, then drooped as if overcome by creeping paralysis.

Acuña's rifle cracked. Something in the shadows yipped and fell into a crackly bush.

"Ha!" he grunted.

And into the forest he leaped, shooting again as he went.

Seward's revolver barked twice at another half glimpsed form. It flopped down as if hit by a club. Then all three Northerners charged in disorderly attack, each running at whatever evasive creature he happened to spy. As they went into action Connell roared with deep chested belligerence.

BEFORE this onset of flying lead the gibbering demons vanished. But not all, or for long. The three surviving Coquibos, now berserk, pounced unerringly on foes huddled behind rocks, under bushes, or between tall tree roots; and, stabbing or clubbing, slew them fast. The whites, pausing momentarily beside bullet pierced corpses, scowled down at them with mingled enmity and puzzlement.

Bestial brown faces, mops of black hair, dirty yellow teeth and underslung jaws topped short, paunchy bodies with skinny arms and spidery legs. Dwarfs, pigmies, halfsized men or oversized monkeys—it was hard to determine at a glance whether they were truly human or simian. Connell, seizing one by the

hair, yanked it over on its belly to see whether it had a tail. It had not. Then, detecting a movement behind a near tree, he dropped the dead thing and charged at the covert.

Seward and Davidson also snapped awake again to the nearness of the assassins and promptly renewed attack. The skulking little devils were viciously persistent; their weapons, stealthily deadly as themselves, were short blowguns, launching diminutive, envenomed darts with silent puffs of breath. Not one of them would stand to face an onrushing foe; but those who dodged bullets or bludgeons by cunning concealment blew new needles and instantly scuttled toward other screens. In this haste lay their destruction. They shot with bad aim and ran too soon. Caught by gunfire or by furious pursuers, they died like rats.

Guns emptied, the whites fought on in individual ways. Acuña dropped his rifle, holstered his belt gun, drew his machete and, adroitly dodging, leaped here and there to corner and kill foes by the blade. Connell plunged about with gun reversed, swinging the butt down on heads until the stock broke, then using the steel barrel with equal devastation.

Seward sank between two stones, rapidly reloaded his revolver, arose to stride forward with deadly shots. Davidson stood coolly without cover, refilled his magazine without undue haste, and then shot a squatty dwarf who had just taken aim at him from behind a tree. Thereafter he killed with the same deliberate accuracy.

All at once there were no more demons. Without audible signal, the survivors vanished for the last time. Hasty rustlings and sounds of running feet died into silence. Peering about, listening, the scattered gunmen relaxed, then drew together.

Connell, grinning, mopped sweat on a sleeve as he came. Davidson drew a long breath and methodically thumbed fresh cartridges into the receiver. Seward also reloaded, glancing warily from side to side.

Acuña wiped his red blade on a trousers leg, looked about for his rifle, then frowned and, after crossing himself, walked fast to Uruki.

The brawny crew captain was leaning against a tall boulder, glum faced. When the Peruvian spoke he did not answer. Lips tight, eyes fixed, he stood rigid. Suddenly his knees bent. With an abrupt thump he fell to the ground, dead.

From his great body protruded several short needles—so short as to be hardly perceptible, yet coated with death. The Peruvian contemplated these, lifted his head with a short sigh and looked around for the other two Coquibos. They were not in sight.

Speechless, the four whites searched the small but dense battlefield together. They found all the big brown men. All were dead. All had been punctured by tiny darts. All had wreaked havoc on the venomous dwarfs as long as their arms could swing or their eyes could see. But those small monkey men, though routed at last by bullets, had destroyed their stalwart brown Coquibo superiors.

Moreover, they would have destroyed also the white invaders but for their protection of tough clothing and personal luck. Looking down at themselves, the four found numbers of little darts stuck in slacks of shirts and trousers. Carefully they pulled these forth, inspected them and flung them away. Every one was yellowish and tipped with a black stain. And not until every one was extracted did any man move freely.

Then said Acuña, flat voiced:

"It seems that from now on we must carry our own baggage. But first—wait a moment."

He walked away toward the stream where the canoes had lain hidden. Before long he returned, announcing with relief:

"Our boat is safe. *Vamonos!*"

WITHOUT more words, the interrupted portage was resumed. Rope, trunks, hammocks, bundled skins and paddles traveled to the concealed dugout by successive journeys. On the last trip Davidson carried several blowguns; Connell dragged a couple of dead enemies by the feet. At the waterside, where sunlight was strong, the doctor briefly and critically examined the short corpses.

"Primitives, but not extraordinary," he declared. "Not retrogressions like the dwarf animals, and of no especial scientific interest. Merely low types resembling the much advertised Congo pigmies, the dwarfs of New Guinea, the Australian bushmen, and similar well known defectives; somewhat higher than the apes, but not much. In short, they are the despised apemen of whom we heard before we started, but whom we all seem to have forgotten about.

"Their presence near this Valley of Dwarfs is an interesting coincidence, but nothing more. They live here because, as we heard before, none of the larger Indians want this rough section; so they have managed to exist here undisturbed. Their attacks on us probably are attributable primarily to fear that now their last refuge was to be overrun by stronger men who would exterminate them."

The listeners nodded agreement. The mysterious fire, the deaths of the three Coquibos at the forested verge of the gulf, the stripping of their bodies and the looting of the deserted camp were now understood. Warned by Acuña's echoing rifle shot at the first horse seen, some human pigmy had spied, sped to arouse his people and brought others to sneak and watch.

Small, sly as snakes, adept at concealment, they had waited until three white men were in the gorge, waited longer for the fourth to go down, then, impatient, they had thrown flaming brands off the far end of the cliffs to start a sweeping conflagration and destroy all life in the Valley of Dwarfs.

The Coquibos running to give warning, and the one following them later, had been slain by invisible blowgunners along their way, plundered of their weapons, even of their loincloths and then shoved over the edge to remove evidence of the manner of their deaths. Then the panicky flight of the other Coquibos, whom they did not yet quite dare attack in their camp, gave them opportunity to loot the abandoned shelters.

Thus looting, they probably fell to quarreling and, like animals, scattered with whatever they could easily carry. The heavy trunks were left for later visits, when they might perhaps be pounded open with stones. The rope also was left intact for several plausible reasons: because all wanted it but none could fight off the others to take it; because the windlass baffled their shallow brains at the moment; or because, with the white men supposedly lost and the brown ones dead or fled, there would be time enough to get it later. Too excited by triumph and riches to think of anything else, or too lazy to go out in the ensuing bad weather, they had postponed their return until too late.

CHAPTER XV

NEW TRAILS OPEN

FAR downstream, in the bright light of another day, Acuña bore back hard on his paddle. As the three behind him reversed strokes, he pointed at something caught on a jagged rock near shore. Scratched, scraped, gouged and splintered by much masterless conflict with stony fangs, it was the other Coquibo canoe. How many miles it had drifted since its first collision none could guess. But all the beholders knew that somewhere up the rough river it had hurled two Indian deserters out to drown.

Without comment, the paddlers swung onward. Surging fast along quiet

reaches, shooting rapids with dizzy velocity, slowing only to work around suicidal cataracts, they sped down the tumbling road with a fraction of the time and toil it had cost to climb. At length they sighted the last whitewater reef and the wide, flat Ucallaga beyond.

"Ha!" joyously grunted Acuña, digging his paddle deeper.

The shoulders behind threw more weight on their own blades. Headlong the dugout slid toward the final barrier, to leap it at one bound and strike beyond with a resounding splash. Then, grinning, the four adventurers relaxed and floated on smooth water.

For several minutes they rested. Then Acuña resumed his stroke, but halted it. From a wooded shore nearby spoke a calm voice:

"Good afternoon, *señores!* Come here, if you please."

The tone, though quiet, was authoritative. Beside a treetrunk stood a lean white man in khaki, contentedly smiling. Others, darker, in soiled whites or faded blues, grouped behind him. Although their formation was haphazard and their attitude nonchalant, they were unmistakably military.

"*Qué quiere?*" snapped Acuña. "What do you want?"

"A word with you." The other grinned. "Come and get it."

After a tense moment the trader stolidly sank his paddle again. The Americans, wordless, stroked with him. As the dugout touched shore, the lounging spokesman above straightened and leisurely saluted.

"Colonel Gonzalez," said he, "Captain Ricardo Alfaro—meaning myself—begs to report that President Sanchez Cerro commands you to return to the army."

Acuña gaped, frowned, then sharply demanded:

"What mockery is this? I am Pablo Acuña. And President Leguia is—"

"Is out," interrupted Alfaro. "President Sanchez Cerro is in. He was Lieutenant-Colonel Sanchez Cerro when you —er—departed on a secret mission, shall we say? At any rate, he now is president, and feels that your talents will be much more appreciated at Lima than in this pestiferous hole." He brushed away some mosquitos, then concluded, "If you will step to my tent I will show you official dispatches which will confirm what I am saying. And if you señores, who, I presume, are the North American explorers known as the Connell Expedition, will accompany us I will show you a bottle of most excellent refreshment. Shall we go?"

THEY would, and did. Crossing an angle of timbered land, they found the officer's tent set on the shore of the Ucallaga. Behind it was a long hut, quarters of the variously dressed privates, who now followed the marchers in file. Before it, moored to the steep bank, lay a speedy motor launch.

As they walked, the captain explained:

"You were recognized, Colonel, on your latest visit to Iquitos. This expedition had caused much talk there; and, after it departed with you, some informer told the Iquitos commandant of your true identity. At that moment he had just received news of the fall of Leguia. He was never an ardent supporter of Leguia; and now he sent felicitations to Sanchez Cerro, promised loyalty, of course, and at the same time requested instructions concerning you. If he had not done that last, I might have been spared much discomfort."

He smiled whimsically, continuing:

"As it was, I had to fly over the Andes, commandeer the best launch at Iquitos, rush up this buggy river and live here among bugs for the past two days. These men are of the Iquitos garrison; slovenly creatures, but good for this bush work. They learned from some Indians where you had gone, and we established this post here to intercept you if you should return. I rejoice that you return so soon. And now, *por amor de Dios*, let us depart *pronto!* I am an itch from head to feet."

Gonzalez chuckled, amused by the other's easy frankness.

"You are a man after my own heart, Captain," he responded. "And if your news is true I hope to have you in my own regiment."

"It is true. Here is the proof. And here, señores, is the bottle."

They had reached the tent. Gonzalez seized the proffered papers. The Americans, less hastily but no less willingly, accepted the other offer. Travel worn, ill fed, they felt fatigue hit them hard now that the long strain was ended. But the liquor banished all that. The captain's refreshment was smooth but potent.

Gonzalez took no liquid restorative as yet. His eyes went swiftly over the written words; then, more slowly, reread them, analyzing the entire context, seeking the slightest sign of a trap. At length, with a deep breath, he folded up the official sheets and pocketed them.

"*Bueno,*" he said.

Then, without another word, he walked back through the woods to the spot where he had landed. Alfaro started after him, slowed, stopped and turned back. Something in the stride of his newly reinstated superior forbade interference.

On the shore of the nameless stream Gonzalez looked down at the rope he had brought away from the Valley of Dwarfs, then up into the high blue sky where clouds drifted, gradually changing form. One of these, dark and majestic, resembled a Jovian head. Silently the Spaniard raised a hand to the brim of his stained sombrero and softly said:

"*Padre Dios,* again I give thanks. You have shown me my way. Presidents come and go, but while this one lasts a colonel can do much for himself. And this colonel will!"

Although he could not precisely foresee that President Sanchez Cerro would in turn be overthrown by revolution in six months, he was under no illusions concerning the advisability of using his own providential power while his lucky star shone, and of planning his campaign at once. Now, for instance, if some temporary trouble among the Indians over here should happen to arise—trouble smoothly incited and as smoothly pacified by one who knew just how to handle them—a certain officer, logically selected as pacifier, would have a very free hand.

WHILE the aloof colonel thus meditated, Captain Alfaro chatted pleasantly with the Northerners, then began quiet preparation for departure. Strolling to the edge, the Americans surveyed the fast boat and gazed down the river. Presently Seward gibed:

"Well, Connell, you big stiff, you're eligible now for the Explorers—or will be, when you've made a few speeches about yourself. Satisfied?"

A slow flush overspread Connell's broad, tanned face, and his heavy brows drew down. But no retort came for several long seconds. Then Connell rumbled—

"One of these days, if you don't quit callin' me a big stiff, I'm goin' to unjoint you."

"One of these days? Why not now?" defied Slim. "You've been training for me quite awhile."

"Yeah, I have," the big fellow admitted. "But I never break a man till I've got no more use for him. I'm only just gettin' started on usin' you."

Seward stared.

"The hell you say!" he jeered. "Meaning what?"

"Meanin' this: That stuff about the Explorers Club is out. At least it's out till I'm fit to join. Maybe I might get in now, but then again maybe not. They're kind of choosey, those lads, and they don't have to take in anybody just because he's gone through the motions of complyin' with the rules. If I tried to crash in now I'd be fourflushin', swipin' Doc's stuff, and they'd probably know it and give me the gate. Even if they didn't, I don't want to get in that way. That's what I meant to do when

I started down here, but I've changed my mind. Now I want to wait till I get to be a real explorer, able to look all those real go-getters in the eye and feel like I really belong. And I want both you fellows to stand by while I get that way."

Amazed, the doctor and the cameraman eyed him. Hard muscled, sober faced, straight thinking, shorn of fat and conceit, Connell was far different from the bloated bully who had been so offensive at Iquitos. And, although his outward improvement had been perceptible during past days, neither of them had suspected how deeply it had sunk into his inner being.

"I've learned quite a lot on this trip," continued Connell, "'specially about me, myself. Now I want to know more about this explorin' racket. I like it. It's a man's game, and I'm for it. I don't care where I go or what I explore. That's up to you, Doc. Pick it out and lead me to it. And you, Slim, trail along and shoot the pictures. You can shoot off your mouth, too, till I get ready to stick my fist in it."

"Try to do that little thing." Seward grinned.

"All right. You've got it comin' some day; and it'll be plenty when it hits. But while I can use you, I'll lay off. Well, now what d'you say?"

His gaze met Davidson's. Brown and blue eyes looked deep into each other, the blue ones critical, the brown ones almost pleading. Then the doctor noncommittally replied:

"I'll think it over, Bull. It sounds all right."

With that he looked meditatively across the river. Soon his studious face brightened; and, though he said no more, his watching companions glanced meaningly at each other. Although the present expedition was not yet completed, he had thought up a new one.

"Well, if you put it that way," drawled Slim, "I'll trail along till you get up guts enough to stick out that fist you talked about. And then heaven help you—you big stiff!"

Connell growled, but his eyes laughed. Davidson suppressed a chuckle, turned, walked toward the tributary where lay the canoe, and where the former Acuña, now Gonzalez, was smoking one cigaret after another. The other white men, including Alfaro, followed. As they reached the bank the ex-trader rose.

"Ready?" he curtly asked.

"Ready, Colonel," replied the captain.

"*Bueno.* After we unload this canoe I wish it towed upstream to a camp of Indians, who—"

"Who have departed," interposed Alfaro. "They disappeared after telling us where you had gone."

"Oh." Gonzalez looked a trifle blank, then shrugged. "Yes, of course. They do not like strange riflemen."

With which cryptic prediction he boarded the dugout. The others followed, grasped the paddles and drove it around to the side of the launch. There, while the meager baggage was transferred by the *mestizo* privates, they settled themselves in the speedboat. Empty, the canoe was tied to a tree and left to await any Coquibos, who, although apparently far away, might be watching nearby. That last act of honest restoration might, Gonzalez knew, stand him in good stead later.

The launch sheered from shore, swung, gathered speed. For a moment the stream to the westward held the eyes of the four who had just conquered its hazards. Then it was gone—gone from sight and, for all but one, gone from life. For the Northerners the lure of the distant Valley of Dwarfs had forever departed. For one Southerner it was a magnet which would soon draw him back. Before them all waited new action, new achievement. So, as the end of day drew near, they rode forth in silent content, minds outdistancing miles and reaching far beyond their close jungle horizon into the dreamy land of Tomorrow.

THE END

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

IN RESEARCHING for "When the Bravest Trembled", his novel beginning in this issue, Gordon Young collected a lot of interesting notes. The most salient of them he sent in to the Camp-fire. Collected from many authoritative sources, they throw sharp highlights on the personalities, North and South, who dominated the Civil War. A portion of these unusual notes will appear in this section to accompany each instalment of the serial. Here is the first batch:

Andrew Jackson

As early as 1830, while Jackson was president, South Carolina was preparing to secede from the Union; and the great advocate of secession was the Vice-President, John C. Calhoun. A formal dinner was given for the purpose of diplomatically trying out Jackson's sentiments on the matter of secession. Old Hickory, with characteristic bluntness, gave his sentiments in the form of a toast that required all secessionists present to rise and drink to *"The Federal Union: It must be preserved!"*

In 1832, South Carolina "nullified" certain Federal import duties—a move intended as a first step toward secession. Jackson at once ordered United States troops to Charleston and declared that if they were not enough to command respect for Federal laws he would lead the next army in person. Lord Charnwood, "Lincoln," p. 46, says, "It is understood that he sent Calhoun private word that he would be the first man to be hanged for treason."

Divided Families

Even outside of the Border States, there are any number of records of divided families during the war. It is well known that Lincoln's brother-in-law, Dr. Todd, was a Confederate. The wife of Gen. Helm (who entered the war as a private) was a half-sister to Mrs. Lincoln. (Pollard's History, III, p. 127, note.) The son of the loyal Commodore Blake, Commandant at Annapolis, was Southern. (Butler's Book, p. 193.) James B. Terrill, Confederate general, had a brother in the Union Army. ("Highways and Byways of the Civil War," by C. E. Macartney, p. 104.) The great Confederate raider, John Morgan, had a brother in the Union Army who was killed in a fight with Morgan's men. (Pollard's History, III, p. 99.) Russell, in "My Diary," p. 203, tells that Captain Adams, Union naval officer, received a letter from his Southern daughter in which she expressed the hope that he would starve; Captain Adams's son was a Confederate soldier. Col. Rogers, of Illinois, killed his own Confederate brother in battle. ("The Iron Furnace," by John H. Aughey, p. 284.) Confederate Gen. Tilghman's mother was an ardent Unionist. After he was captured, she told him, "Were I to hear there was any chance of your being exchanged, I would go on my knees to the President to prevent you from again joining the rebels." ("Anecdotes of the Rebellion," p. 557.)

Lincoln

There were rumors of, and perhaps there really were, plots to assassinate Lincoln before his inauguration. He was brought into Washington surreptitiously (some say in disguise). Brig.-Gen. Stone, Inspector-General of the District of Columbia at the time, twenty-five years afterward did not believe Lincoln could have been inaugurated without the presence of troops. "I believe that tumults would have been created, during which he would have been killed." ("Battles and Leaders," I, p. 21.)

"Lincoln wielded more authority than any single Englishman has done since Oliver Cromwell." (James Bryce, "American Commonwealth," I, p. 61.) The right of habeas corpus was suspended in Washington and Maryland. Russell, "My Diary," p. 559-560, tells of a judge who was imprisoned for issuing writ of habeas corpus, attorney for serving it; and women for criticizing military officers. Political arrests were common throughout the North. Seward and Stanton both enjoyed arbitrary powers.

Lincoln showed no personal fear. Russell saw him alone on the streets of Washington, carrying parcels. During Lincoln's levees the White House doors were open to anybody who wanted to come. Russell says privates in hobnailed shoes and chewing tobacco mingled with the guests. ("My Diary," p. 480.)

None of Lincoln's cabinet expected war before Sumter fell, and it does not appear that Lincoln

himself was more prophetic than they. W. T. Sherman, who knew the South, its courage and rashness, found Lincoln uninterested in the Southern war spirit. "Oh, well, I guess we'll manage to keep house," said Lincoln, carelessly, much to the disgust of the impetuous Sherman. (Sherman's "Memoirs," I, p. 168.)

UNTIL July, 1862, it was necessary to have Lincoln's approval before a spy or deserter could be put to death. ("Desertion During the Civil War," p. 165.) One of the reasons for Lincoln's extreme reluctance to have deserters punished was expressed in, "Must I shoot a simple-minded boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wily agitator who induces him to desert?" (Charnwood's "Abraham Lincoln," p. 383.)

Lincoln was not understood by the men about him. Richard H. Dana wrote Charles Francis Adams in 1863, ". . . the most striking thing is the absence of personal loyalty to the President. It does not exist. He has no admirers, no enthusiastic supporters. . . . He does not act or talk or feel like the ruler of a great empire in a crisis. . . . He likes to talk and tell stories with all sorts of persons who come to him for all sorts of purposes, than to give his mind to the great and manly duties of his great post." (Quoted in Rhodes' "History," IV, p. 264.)

Jefferson Davis

Russell in "My Diary," p. 173, records that Jefferson Davis's "tone of voice and manner of speech are rather remarkable for what are considered Yankee peculiarities." Davis was nearly blind in one eye and subject to excruciating attacks of neuralgia. It was unfortunate for the South that Davis was elected President, because he had been a member of the Mississippi Legislature that repudiated its debts to the great loss of European investors who naturally were wary of buying Confederate bonds with Davis as President. ("Some Memories of the Civil War," by George Haven Putnam, p. 82.) He was not generally popular in the South. Pollard's "History," Preface, vol. I, called him an absolute autocrat; said Lee lost at Gettysburg because Davis refused to support plans for invading Pennsylvania (III, p. 38); blamed Davis for the fall of Vicksburg because he appointed Pemberton Lieutenant-General when Pemberton had never been on a battlefield in the war (III, p. 42). Robert E. Lee was not a popular officer, having failed in the West Virginia campaign, when Davis, in the face of much protest, appointed him to succeed the wounded Johnston. There was nothing wishy-washy about Davis.

GRANT and other Northern writers have explained that the South was able so long to oppose the North because Davis was a dictator and could crush and oppose all internal opposition. "The whole South was a military camp." (Grant's "Memoirs," II, p. 503.) But Pollard's contemporary history abused Davis and his cabinet during the war; so did newspapers; Lieut.-Col. Fremantle in "Three Months in the Southern States" relates how a dashing and famous officer was in hot water with civilian authorities for impressing horses (p. 159). When Davis's government attempted to enforce the tax-in-kind law, which seized one-tenth of the farmer's products, the impressment roused such a storm that troops threatened to withdraw from the war. ("Desertion During the Civil War." Chapter I.) Sherman said, "I do not know why it is the Northern people hate him (Davis) so, but they do, and will never get over their feeling in that respect. Davis did no worse than anybody else, but I suppose the people are bound to have somebody to hate." (Johnson's "Sherman," p. 562.)

Beauregard

Beauregard was superintendent at West Point when Louisiana seceded. After Bull Run he treated many prisoners as guests and sent them home without exchange, because of courtesies shown the Confederate wounded. From spies and captured data he said that he knew as much about the strength and disposition of the Union forces as the Federals themselves before Bull Run. ("Battles and Leaders," I, 197.) Fremantle, "Three Months in the Southern States," p. 193, tells that Beauregard's hair was not whitened by worry but because the blockade kept out dye. He was a small man but proud of and distinguished for his strength. Sherman gave Beauregard as a reference in applying for the position as superintendent of the Louisiana Military Academy. (Hart's "Sherman," p. 50.) Beauregard sent two sons to Sherman's school. John C. Ropes, the military critic and historian, rated Beauregard high as a general. ("Critical Sketches of Federal and Confederate Commanders," Historical Society of Massachusetts publication.)

Grant

Grant was one of the most courageous, kindly, and least vindictive of men, with an infinite ability to keep silent. Grant was not (according to Theodore Ayrault Dodge, in an address before the Historical Society of Massachusetts, 1884) a great general in the sense that Sherman and Lee were. "He never won a battle where the fighting was desperate . . . In every struggle with Lee until the end . . . he was worsted . . . It was his constancy under defeat, his calm weighing of the value of victory, his cool determination . . ." Woodward, in "Meet General Grant," says the Grant family owned slaves until the end of the war. Franc B. Wilkie, "Pen and Powder," p. 96, was with Grant for two years as a correspondent, constantly saw and frequently spoke to him, yet Grant never spoke to him. Gen. Wilson, "Under the Old Flag," I, p. 390, relates that Grant, after the Battle of the Wilderness, did not speak a word to any one that showed lack of composure, yet wept in the seclusion of his tent.

Grant's courtesy toward Lee at Appomattox was remarkable in view of the fact that he could scarcely have forgotten the day during the Mexican War when Brevet-Major Robert E. Lee, always immaculate even in defeat, had said to Lieut. Ulysses S. Grant, always slovenly even in victory, "You had best go back to your tent and clean up a bit!" ("Marse Robert," by James C. Young, p. 49.)

A NOTE from Reece Hague, in connection with his dog-racing story in this issue:

Alberni, B. C., Canada

In the early days of The Pas Dog Derby I was managing secretary of the event and vividly recall being at the local depot one blustering winter afternoon in 1920 to greet a young Alaskan dog-racer named Walter Goyne, known in his own country as "The Going Kid", who was coming to Northern Manitoba to take a flyer in the third of our endurance races—a 100-mile event.

Accustomed as we were to having our mushers running a good part of the way behind their teams, it came as a shock to find Goyne was a permanent cripple as a result of frostbite. When we saw the Going Kid's malamutes and compared them with our local dogs, which were not only huskies by name but husky in size, we felt really sorry for the visitor.

But on race day we got the surprise of our lives. It was customary to despatch a fast team and cutter to a point a few miles up the Saskatchewan River, on which the race started and finished, about an hour before the first teams were expected back. The idea being that the cutter should make all speed back to town as soon as the leading string hove in sight and ring the fire bell so that officials and spectators could be on hand at the finish.

WALTER GOYNE fooled us all badly. He arrived back a couple of hours before any one had considered it possible for a team to complete the journey and, no one being on hand at the finishing line, proceeded on into the town and rang the fire bell himself, allowing us ample time to go down to the river and stand around for an hour or so waiting for the second team.

In the 1921 race, which was over a 200-mile course, Goyne was unsuccessful, and before the 1922 event he and most of his dogs went through the ice and were drowned.

After Goyne's death some of his malamutes which had not been attached to the sleigh when the musher and his dogs went through the ice were sold. One of them was acquired by a lad named Earl Brydges, who was at that time cleaning up in all the local boys' races and to whom the Alaskan had been a veritable god.

In 1930 Earl Brydges himself won The Pas 200-Mile Dog Derby, and shortly after his victory I received a letter from him enclosing a snap of his dogs crossing the finishing line. In the course of his letter Earl said: "Do you recognize Rattler in the picture? He was one of Walter Goyne's malamute pups and eighteen months old when I came into possession of him at the time of Walter's death. He was the leader of the team when I won the Quebec race in 1924, but I am not using him on the lead now, as he isn't very particular about it . . . My team this year consisted mainly of Rattler's strain . . . Because Walter lost in 1921, there have been articles written saying that the 200-mile race was too much for the malamutes. Why Walter lost was not his dogs' fault, as he said himself. It was because they had not been in training or condition for that race, having been going around to shows all the time, and he had no opportunity to get them in shape. My team this year has proved the Alaskan malamutes are just as tough as the huskies of this country, if not tougher."

That is what one of the most famous dog-racers of all time thinks of the malamutes—and he is a thorough-going Canadian at that. Probably a lot of people think different and it would be interesting to hear what some of your experienced readers think. Personally I am open to conviction either way.

Brydges won the 200 mile race in 1930 with dogs of the malamute strain and repeated the victory in 1931. There was no race last year. But in 1928 and 1929 Emil St. Godard, driving huskies, beat Earl's malamutes. Yes, there is room for a good man-sized argument in this husky versus malamute topic. —REECE HAGUE

ARE American historians neglecting our own pioneer heroes?

Grosse Ile, Michigan

Does anybody know anything about the old "Mast Trail" from Southern California to Santa Fé, in the days before the Mexican War? The Mexicans used to drive hogs along it, following the feed—mostly acorns—taking months for the trip. Up Salt River, then north through the Tonto, jumped somewhere into Colorado for a piece, then down to Sante Fé.

Another thing: I looked through three school histories of the U. S. the other day, and couldn't find Kit Carson mentioned in any one of 'em, to say nothing of Bridger, Beckworth, Coran St. Vrain, the Burts and Williams. And these books, professing to be scholarly histories, just ignore the men who explored and indirectly or directly added about half of the territory we possess to the U. S. Everybody looks upon David Livingstone as the man who opened Africa to civilization. And, of course, any educated man is supposed to know about LaSalle, De Soto, etc. But why should our histories (?) ignore the equally arduous and valuable work of our own American explorers? Of course, you can get part of it all in stories—which disappear and are forgotten—or in books that handle a part of the story: Laut's "Conquest of the Great Northwest", Quinnan's "The Sante Fé Trail", somebody's "The Bozeman Trail", and "Rio Grande" appearing recently in the *American Mercury*. But can't this whole story, a particularly glamorous one, and vital to any real understanding of American history and of the West as it still is, be written properly, in one book—which might indeed extend to more than one volume? Of course Bancroft did a lot of it, with too much statistical detail, and getting his information chiefly from Government reports and State documents, which, on such a subject, are the poorest places to get it. Why, the only matter I have ever seen on the pre-Revolutionary history of Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi was in a series of *boys' stories* by Constance Lindsay Skinner, though they contained matter pretty vital at that!

—LEONARD K. SMITH

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For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

East Indian Delicacies

WHERE in America can a man satisfy a craving for *boa attap, sambal manis* or *petiss?*

Request:—"Just by way of introduction I will say that my mother was born in Holland but spent her childhood in Dutch East India and later became a well known operatic star in Germany. Her brother (my uncle) was civil engineer for the Dutch government at Soerabaia.

When I was still quite a youngster he sent me a lot of Indian delicacies; we lived in Munich at the time.

Among this lot was a jar of preserves that looked a lot like lima beans, only translucent and in a honey-like sirup. Somewhere in the back of my noodle seems to be the name *'boa attab.'* Whether that is Javanese or Malay I don't know.

Perhaps you could put me on the right track. I crave to get some of this stuff and am sure it can be gotten in New York if one only knew where.

As to myself, it was quite amusing when my uncle paid us a visit back in 1901 and mother and he would converse in Javanese or Malay. I think they could talk both. I even picked up a few words myself—can't think of any except *pisang-pisang* just now.

Anyhow, if you can throw any light on this mystery it would be greatly appreciated."

—HENRY M. SCHUBEL, Cranford, New Jersey

Reply, by Capt. R. W. van Raven de Sturler:—I myself, having been born in Batavia, would be more than delighted if I knew any place in the U. S. where *boa attap, sambal manis, petiss* and all the many other Javanese titbits were obtainable.

Some 25 to 30 years ago there used to be a store in Den Haag, Holland, which imported all of these delicacies from Java—they also charged enormous prices for them, I remember—but I have since forgotten the store's name and street address, and regret that I am unable to be of any help to you at this very moment. I shall, however, get in touch with some friends who may be able to help both of us.

Rattlesnake

AVERSE to sunbathing. It can be fatal.

Request:—"I have been informed that it is impossible for a rattlesnake to live longer than twenty minutes in the full glare of the midday sun. Having lived in Florida, I took issue with the person making the remark. Is it true?"

—J. R. IBING, Hot Springs, Arkansas

Reply, by Mr. Karl P. Schmidt:—I am quite sure that your opponent is right in principle, and that it is true that snakes are killed by the hot sun if they can not get away. The length of time required, however, would depend on various conditions, such as humidity and the kind of rattlesnake experimented with.

Swimming

WHY the Japanese won the Olympics: They mastered the American crawl better than our own team did.

Request:—"I would appreciate any information on the crawl stroke used by the Japanese in the recent Olympics."

—W. J. MCGOWAN, Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Reply, by Mr. L. deB. Handley:—The Japanese swimmers who competed in the Olympic games at Los Angeles last Summer used the type of crawl stroke developed in the United States.

Among them were noticeable some slight differ-

ence of action, but these may be ascribed to individual peculiarities and to the fact that very few swimmers acquire perfect form, even when they are coached by the ablest experts.

I had the opportunity, however, to discuss Japanese standards with the head coach of the Japanese Olympic team and found them to conform with the standards adopted by the leading American authorities, but not very closely followed by the men who swam for the United States at Los Angeles.

In fact, Japan's victory appears to have been due partly to the fact that the Nippon contenders displayed greater mastery of American crawl than did our own swimmers, more largely centralization of directing effort in Japan and to mode of life and general conditions there more conducive to concentration on sport and intensive training.

Concerning the arm drive of the crawl, Japanese and American experts agree that the hands should enter the water in front of the face, each dipping directly ahead of the eye on its own side, then sweep along the center line of progression, or under the middle of the body.

Russian

NOTE on the significance of name-endings.

Request:—"1. Can you tell me, briefly, the general rule or practice in the formation and use of Russian names? For instance, names such as these—Vassili Pavlovitch Vassilevsky and Liuba Petrovna Petrakoff. I would like to know how these names were formed and how the Russians used them when addressing each other—at least, how it was done back in Czarist times for, perhaps, it may be different since the revolution.

2. Can you tell me the Russian equivalent of the English sir or mister? Can you tell me what *tovarisch* means?"

—ROBERT L. WILLIAMS, Amsterdam, New York

Reply, by G. I. Colbron:—1. The majority of Russian names, like the majority of names almost anywhere, date back to the Middle Ages when "family names" were unknown except among the nobility, and then it was the name of the estate usually. So in Russia men and women were known as "son of So-and-So," "daughter of So-and-So." Vassili Pavlovitch is Vassili son of Paul. Or Vassili Pavlov would also be Vassili son of Paul (different endings are used in different localities). Anna Pavlowa, to use a famous instance, is Anna daughter of Paul. The ending "off", "vitch" are like the endings "son", "sohn", "sen" in English and German, also the Scandinavian tongues.

But even today, when certain of those names have attained the dignity of a definite family name, like Petrakoff, for instance, the person will usually be named, to use the one you cite, Liuba Petrovna Petrakoff, which is Liuba daughter of Peter Petrakoff. They may have forgotten that back several centuries Petrakoff stood merely for "son of Peter."

The Russians, however, still use a certain form of address which is not used elsewhere. Instead of saying miss (or Mrs.) Petrakoff they will in all respect address the lady as Liuba Petrovna.

2. In Czaristic days the Russian equivalent of mister was *gospodin.* But now the words *tovarisch* (comrade) or *grazhdanin* (citizen) are generally used.

Automobile

BUYING tires for foreign cars.

Request:—"I have experienced a great deal of difficulty trying to find tires to fit my car. The car uses 17 x 50 rear and 16 x 50 front tires—French Michelins.

These tires are made with the outer circle of the tread not quite in line with the inner circle where the rim fits—I suppose to keep the tire from creeping on the rim—but making it almost impossible, if not entirely so, to get tires in this country. I wondered if you could tell me if such tires could be gotten here.

Sending to France for them has to be done through an agent and the cost including shipping and duty brings it to about $70 a tire—to say nothing of the delay and inconvenience."

—GOULD SHAW, Miami Beach, Florida

Reply, by Mr. Edmund B. Neil:—I'm afraid that I can not help you very much. The purchase of foreign sizes and types of tires in this country is practically impossible at this time.

I presume that the wheels are of the wire spoke type, else the idea of changing them to an American size would have suggested itself to you. Even so, it might be less expensive to have the wheels rebuilt, using a domestic type of rim, and, of course, new spokes. If of the wood spoke type the change to an available rim size would be comparatively inexpensive. The cost of new rims and spokes for wire wheels is usually around $20 per wheel, and about $15 or less for wood wheels. It might be possible to utilize the newer American "drop center" type rims on either wood or wire wheels, with standard 17 x 5.00 or larger tires. The rim diameter should preferably remain the same, namely 17 inches for both front and rear.

If you would care to write me again, giving further details concerning the make and weight of the car, year, model, etc., possibly some of my friends in the automobile business can assist. I say this as an owner of two foreign made cars myself, both of which I have had to convert for American size tires. You might write to Mr. Schearly, care of the Zumbach Motor Company, 134 West 54th Street, New York, N. Y. Mr. Schearly has assisted me in obtaining parts for my cars.

There is a branch of one of the large rim makers here in Philadelphia which rebuilds wheels (wire type) for many of the racing car drivers in this territory, many of which are of foreign design. Address the United Wheel & Rim Service, Inc., 1412 Fairmount Ave., Philadelphia, Pa. While ordinarily this concern handles only parts for existing American types of rims, this particular branch does the work referred to, or has it done.

A complete list of the "Ask Adventure" experts appears on page 126

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Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to this magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The expert will in all cases answer to the best of his ability, but neither he nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment. Ask Adventure covers outdoor opportunities, but only in the way of general advice.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Small Boating *Skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Canoeing *Paddling, sailing, cruising; regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 117 W. Harrison St., Chicago, Illinois.

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Motor Camping MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M. D., care American Tourist Camp Assn., 152 West 65th St., New York City.

Yachting A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Place, Chicago, Ill.

Motor Vehicles *Operation, legislative restrictions and traffic.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

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Precious and Semi-precious Stones *Cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information.*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Cal.

Forestry in the United States *Big-Game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States.*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and products. No questions on employment.*—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Box 575, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign CAPTAIN GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas.

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U. S. Marine Corps CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, R. F. D. 1, Box 614, La Canada, California.

Aviation *Airplanes; airships; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; laws; licenses; operating data schools; foreign activities; publications. Parachutes and gliders. No questions on stock promotion.*—LIEUTENANT JEFFREY R. STARKS, 1408 "N" Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, Box 174, Farmingdale, N. J.

Federal Investigative Activities *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, Box 174, Farmingdale, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 189-16 Thirty-seventh Avenue, Flushing, New York.

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American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

Taxidermy SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure.*

Entomology *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Herpetology *General information on reptiles and amphibians; their habits and distribution.*—KARL P. SCHMIDT, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois.

Ornithology *Birds; their habits and distribution.*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, New York, N. Y.

Stamps DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

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Old Songs that Men Have Sung ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 995 Pine St., San Francisco, California.

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Baseball FREDERICK LIEB, *The New York Evening Post,* 75 West St., New York City.

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, P. O. Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

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The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, wages, duties, statistics and records of American shipping. Vessels lost, abandoned, sold to aliens and all government owned vessels.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESENBERG, 47 Dick St., Rosemont, Alexandria, Va.

★**The Sea Part 2** *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

★**The Sea Part 3** *Atlantic and Indian Oceans: Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.) *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.*—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

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★**New Guinea** L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa** TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands** WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross," Suva, Fiji.

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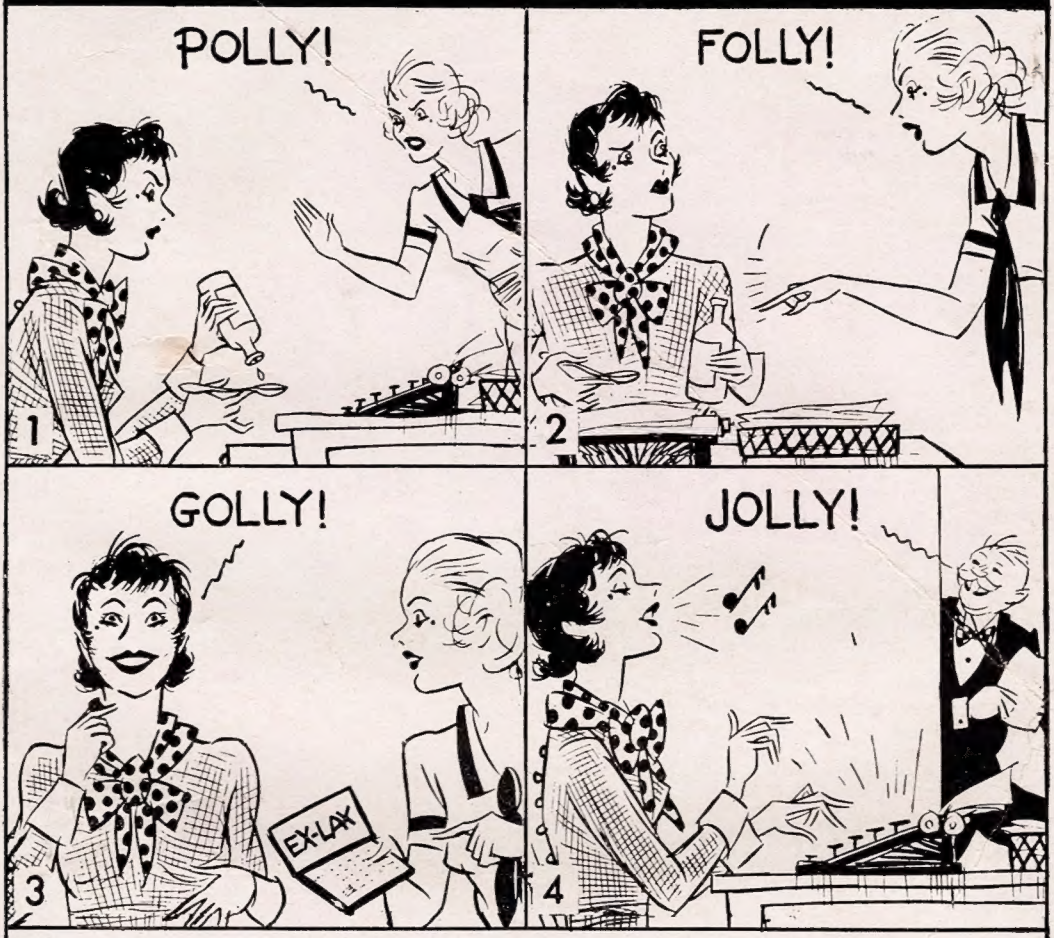
SMILES AND TRIALS

BY JEFFERSON MACHAMER



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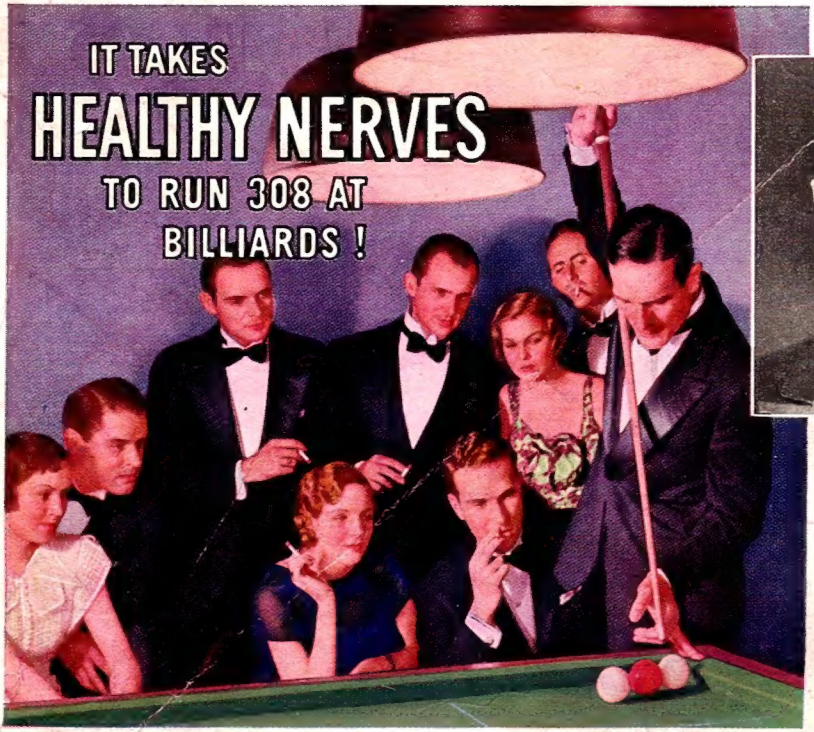

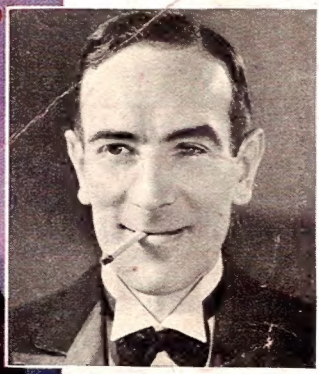

● MR. HAGENLOCHER says, "For successful billiard play, watch your nerves! . . . I've smoked Camels for years. They're milder. They never upset my nervous system."

● ABOVE—ERICH HAGENLOCHER, twice 18.2 balk-line billiard champion of the world. Healthy nerves have carried him through stern international competition to many titles.

Steady Smokers turn to Camels

"I know of no sport," says Erich Hagenlocher, "that places a greater strain on the nerves than tournament billiards. The slightest inaccuracy can ruin an important run. One simple rule for success is, 'Watch your nerves!' I have smoked Camels for years. I like their taste better and because they're milder, they never upset my nervous system."

There *is* a difference between Camel's costlier tobaccos and the tobaccos used in other popular cigarettes. You'll notice the difference in taste and in mildness—and Camels *never* jangle your nerves. You can prove this yourself. Begin today!

IT IS MORE FUN TO KNOW

Camels are made from finer, MORE EXPENSIVE tobaccos than any other popular brand . . . . They give more pleasure. Your own taste will confirm this.

Camel's Costlier Tobaccos

NEVER GET ON YOUR NERVES
NEVER TIRE YOUR TASTE